
S E R M O N S
AND
EXHORTATIONS.

BY THE
REV. JOSEPH MORONY, S. J.

S E R M O N S

OF

EXHORTATIONS

BY

WILLIAM HENRY WARD

S E R M O N S,
AND
EXHORTATIONS
FOR
THE WHOLE YEAR,
ON THE
SACRED MYSTERIES AND MOST IMPORTANT
TRUTHS
OF THE
CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

BY THE LATE
REV. JOSEPH MORONY, S. J.

Heretofore a celebrated Preacher in Limerick, Waterford,
and other Parts of the Province of Munster, and
lately a Resident in Dublin.

Beati qui audiunt Verbum Dei, & custodiunt illud.

Blessed are they that hear the Word of God, and keep it.

St. LUKE, xi. 28.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOLUME I.
CONTAINING
EXHORTATIONS.

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1796.

S E R M O N S

AND

EXHORTATIONS

FOR

THE WHOLE YEAR

ON THE

ACCORDING TO THE NEW TESTAMENT

CHRISTIAN



1857

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The PUBLISHER to the READER.

SOME unforeseen obstacles having hitherto retarded the publication of the *Exhortations and Sermons* of the late Rev. JOSEPH MORONY, it is with singular pleasure I at length present them to the Public, in their own plain, native dress, unattended by any pomp or glare of expression, but replete with *important instructions* and *solid truths*, adapted to the most common concerns of life. It is hoped that every allowance will be made for a POSTHUMOUS WORK of this kind, where only instruction and edification are aimed at: should, however, any be found who look for rhetorical flowers and beauties of diction in moral discourses, or who attend only to the arrangement and choice of words, and neglect the sense, it may not be improper to lay before them, with great submission, the following remarks of Abbé Grou, extracted from a much admired work of his lately published.—

‘ To pay no attention to the nature of
‘ the things themselves, and attend only

‘ to the beauty of the discourse ; or to
 ‘ suffer the mind to be dazzled with the
 ‘ arrangement of words, and to neglect
 ‘ the sense of them, is a defect that is
 ‘ but too common. This disposition of
 ‘ mind proceeds from an essential want of
 ‘ judgment : for the expression is merely
 ‘ for the thought ; the whole drift of it is
 ‘ to deliver the thought, that it may pass
 ‘ through the organ of the senses, into
 ‘ the mind of others. The greatest merit,
 ‘ therefore, of any discourse, or of any
 ‘ composition, is in the thoughts being
 ‘ true, just, and solid, and in the argu-
 ‘ ments being conclusive ; and this is
 ‘ what the hearer or the reader should
 ‘ seek for, preferably to every thing else.
 ‘ The style, the eloquence, and all that
 ‘ appertains to the art of speaking and
 ‘ of writing, should only be employed to
 ‘ represent the thought in its genuine
 ‘ light, and in its proper energy. What
 ‘ advantage accrues from a discourse that
 ‘ has purity of language, that is brilliant,
 ‘ pathetic, and figurative, if the substance
 ‘ be not solid, or if all that pomp only
 ‘ serves to paint and embellish falsehood ?
 ‘ On the other hand, what great harm re-
 ‘ sults from a work, which, though not
 ‘ written in perfection, is solid in thought
 ‘ and in sentiment ? I know that the
 ‘ perfection of a composition is the com-
 ‘ pound of these two things ; but in the
 ‘ choice,

‘ choice, there should be no hesitation;
 ‘ and that which is well thought should
 ‘ always carry it over what is only well
 ‘ said.

‘ The test, then, of good sense, de-
 ‘ pends on the attention that is paid to
 ‘ the substance of things. The contrary,
 ‘ however, is but too common, and even
 ‘ in matters where the mode of expression
 ‘ ought to be the least attended to. Ser-
 ‘ mons, for example, the end of which is
 ‘ to instruct the people in the tenets of
 ‘ faith and in morals, cannot be too simple
 ‘ and familiar as to the expression, no
 ‘ more than they can be too solid and
 ‘ accurate as to the thought. The hearer
 ‘ should only esteem and value that which
 ‘ enlightens him, moves him, and excites
 ‘ him to goodness; and this, also, is the
 ‘ sole object which the preacher ought to
 ‘ have in view.

‘ Nevertheless, in what light are ser-
 ‘ mons considered now?—As discourses of
 ‘ parade, in which the preacher displays
 ‘ his talents and the auditor the delicacy
 ‘ of his taste. A most shocking abuse,
 ‘ which vilifies and prophanes a sublime
 ‘ and heavenly ministry, and renders it at
 ‘ least useless for the advantage of souls!

‘ How has this happened? Is it owing
 ‘ to the preachers or to the hearers?—I do
 ‘ not know. But I know so far, that
 ‘ both the one and the other are in these
 ‘ times

‘ times equally and almost universally corrupted: that those seek only to please, and not to convert; whilst these have every other object in view besides that of being instructed, and of being excited to live better.

‘ A good sermon is at present nothing more than a discourse well divided and arranged, full of affectation and a false brilliancy, both as to thought and style. O Paul! where art thou? why dost thou not fulminate these unworthy ministers; and put to confusion those Christians who resort to churches to judge if a sermon be composed and delivered according to the rules of the oratorical art? is it thus that the Athenians went to hear Demosthenes on their political affairs? and did this orator study to please them more than to persuade them? Are the important interests of salvation of less moment than those of the state? And if the pageantry of wit, of far-fetched thoughts, and of affected expressions, be absolutely unseasonable in every serious discourse, how much more so must it be in a Christian discourse?

‘ The cause of the evil is, that those who preach, as well as those who hear, have lost the idea of the evangelical ministry. For did the preachers consider that they are ambassadors of the Most High; that they speak in the name of
‘ Jesus

' Jesus Christ; that they are commissioned
 ' to announce to men the great truths,
 ' the eternal truths, the only important
 ' truths; their sermons would be at once
 ' more nervous and more majestic. They
 ' would rise above human eloquence, thro'
 ' a contempt of it; they would persuade
 ' the minds, make deep impressions on
 ' the hearts of their hearers; they would,
 ' in short, approve themselves worthy instruments of grace.

' Did the hearers, also, reflect on what
 ' their duty is to seek for in sermons, on
 ' the motives which should lead them on,
 ' on the disposition they should be in, and
 ' on the fruit which they ought to draw
 ' from them; they would forsake those
 ' stage-orators, those fine speakers, whom
 ' interest, vain-glory, and ambition induce to mount Christian pulpits; and
 ' they would flock with eagerness to the
 ' sermons that are simple, instructive, pathetic, and full of the unction of apostolic men. They would oblige those
 ' who are not so to become such; who, finding themselves abandoned, would
 ' either quit the sacred function which they dishonour, or betake themselves to
 ' a worthy discharge of it.

' Preachers, it is true, ought not to regard the depraved taste of their hearers.
 ' It belongs to them to give the law on the manner of preaching; and they
 ' would

' would always preach well, if, with or-
 ' dinary abilities, they endeavoured to
 ' instruct and to move; if, in order to
 ' sanctify others, they began by sanctify-
 ' ing themselves; if they had no other
 ' views than such as become Apostles;
 ' and if their way of life proved that
 ' they were intimately penetrated with
 ' the truths which they deliver. They
 ' are, therefore, culpable, when they sub-
 ' ject themselves to their auditory, and
 ' when they sacrifice to a depraved judg-
 ' ment those sacred rules which religion,
 ' as well as sound sense and true taste,
 ' impose on them.

' But the hearers themselves are not
 ' less blameable, either when they censure
 ' and despise solid and Christian preachers,
 ' who have not all the wit, all the agree-
 ' ableness of figure, of voice, and of ges-
 ' ture, which they could wish; or when
 ' they extol to the skies, and follow in
 ' crowds, some certain orators, who are
 ' hardly Christians, on account of their
 ' fine composition and pleasing delivery.

' How prejudicial to religion is this rage
 ' of preferring in sermons frivolous and
 ' prophane ornaments, to the noble and
 ' majestic simplicity of the Gospel! It is
 ' no longer the word of God that people
 ' hear, or that they are desirous of hear-
 ' ing, but the word of man: nor yet is it
 ' the word of a man who handles those
 ' sublime

‘ sublime matters with proper dignity,
‘ but of a vain, ambitious, and interested
‘ man, who prostitutes the sacred function
‘ in the display of his own abilities, to
‘ advance in life and obtain worldly ad-
‘ vantages. How shameful, how detest-
‘ able is this profanation of the ministry
‘ of Jesus Christ! What will he say, at
‘ his Last Judgment, to such preachers
‘ and to such hearers?’

Dublin, April 1, 1796.

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advances in life and obtain worldly ad-
vantages. How shameful, how de-
spicable the promotion of the ministry
of Jesus Christ! What will be the
the last judgment, to such persons
and to such hearts?

Done, April 1, 1790.

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10th inst. in relation to the
above matter.

I am sorry to hear
that you are unable to
procure the same.

Very respectfully,
J. H. Brown

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EXHORTATIONS, &c.

FOR

THE WHOLE YEAR.

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

THE Nativity of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, being one of the greatest festivals in the year,---the ground-work of the redemption and salvation of mankind,---the Church has thought proper to employ a considerable space of time to prepare the faithful for that great solemnity. This space of time is called *Advent*, or the Coming of the Lord. In order, therefore, to comply with the zealous, charitable, and pious views of the Church of Christ, we are to apply ourselves particularly during this holy season to penance and godliness, that Christ Jesus may vouchsafe to visit us with his holy grace, so as to be born spiritually within us. We are, in a word, *to prepare the way of the Lord*, as St. John Baptist said when he began to announce our Lord, *and make straight his paths*. This preparation consists in two points:---1st, in forsaking our evil ways; and, 2d, in improving in virtue.

Forsake your evil ways, Christians, for *now is the hour for us*, as St. Paul says in the Epistle which the Church reads this day, *to arise from sleep*, that is, the lethargy of sin. *Let us, therefore, cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting or drunkenness; not in obscenities or impurities; not in contention or emulation:*

B

For

For our salvation is nearer now than when we believed. Every moment of our lives brings us nearer and nearer to that last and dreadful moment on which depends our eternal lot, either for happiness or misery.

Left her mild and gentle lectures should prove insufficient, Christians, to induce you to forsake your evil ways, the Church this day wishes to excite a holy terror in your souls, by laying before you the dreadful picture of the last and universal judgment. *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.* The consideration of this dreadful mystery of religion, is expedient and seasonable, at a time when we are preparing to behold the lamb-like appearance of our God upon earth. Who can seriously reflect on that last and tremendous day, its foregoing signs, the attending circumstances, and the frightful consequences that must ensue, without the liveliest apprehensions of the judgments of God? No one can be so insensible as not to be moved and terrified at the dismal alterations that are to appear in the sun, moon, and stars; the distress of nations; the roaring of the sea and of the waves; the furious conflict and warring of the winds; the confusion of the elements; the sudden shock and violent agitations of the earth; the shaking and removing of the powers or pillars of the Heavens; and, in fine, the convulsion of all nature. The terror and consternation will then be so great, as Christ Jesus assures us in the Gospel this day, that *men will wither away with fear, and the expectation that shall come upon the whole world.* But what must be the sensation of sinners, when they shall see the Son of Man coming upon a cloud, with great power and majesty? And how dreadful must that scene appear, to which all the rest was only a prelude! What darkens our understandings at present from a clear perception of the severity of God's justice, or even an apprehension of his judgments, is, that *we only see things through the mist of faith*, as St. Paul says, and are witnesses to as many acts of clemency, as of justice and severity, on the side of God. But at the last day we shall see things as they are, and nothing but severity and rigour. The

mercies



mercies of God will then be at end, and give way to his inflexible wrath and justice. Then the Son of God will appear as *the roaring Lion of Juda*, and avenge upon all sinners the many offences and outrages they had committed against the Divine Majesty, in the violation of his laws. Here I might lead you to the contemplation of the fury, despair, and confusion of the sinner, on being separated from the just, on seeing every foul action of his life laid open and exposed to the whole world, and on hearing the dreadful and irrevocable sentence passed on him, of sufferings and torture among the Devils in Hell for all eternity. But the nature of this discourse does not admit of deep and diffuse reasoning. I cannot, however, avoid observing, that we, every one of us here present this day, will all appear at that general meeting of all mankind, in presence of the Supreme Judge of the living and the dead. *This generation shall not pass until these things are fulfilled.* When they shall happen, is of no consequence to us---but in what character, is of the last consequence. Shall we be ranked amongst the sheep, or goats? the just, or sinners? those that shall calmly support the presence of the Lord, or those that, withering away with fear, from a consciousness of their guilty lives and the terrible evils that are ready to burst over them, shall in vain invoke and call on the hills to cover them, and the mountains to fall on them, so as to screen and shelter them from the face of the living God? This is a subject for proper, wholesome meditation: let us, therefore, think frequently of it, that, by fearing the judgments of God, and avoiding every thing sinful, we may prevent the dreadful consequences of the wrath of God. *Look well to yourselves---*they are the words of Christ Jesus, after the Gospel this day---*lest perhaps your hearts be over-charged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and the cares of this life, and lest that day on a sudden surprise you: for, like a snare, it shall come upon all those that sit upon the face of the whole earth.* Watch, therefore, at all times, praying, that you may be accounted worthy to escape all those things that are to come, and to stand before the Son of Man.

The second thing we have to do, in order to prepare for the coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, is, to apply particularly to godliness and piety. For St. Paul, after enjoining us, in the Epistle of this day, *to cast off the works of darkness*, orders us *to put on the armour of light*; that is, to square all our actions by the principles of Religion, and the maxims of Christ Jesus, who is the light of the world. The Apostle even goes farther, and desires us *to put on Christ Jesus*; meaning thereby, to shew a certain resemblance with him, by a perfect imitation of his life and virtues. A great many have no other notion of religion, than avoiding certain crimes and excesses which Heathens themselves would blush to be guilty of. But this is a very great and prejudicial error: for religion, or virtue, consists not only in avoiding the great crimes prohibited by the law, but likewise in doing the good, and practising the virtues prescribed by the law; and not only doing the good and practising the virtues prescribed by the law, but carrying this good, and those virtues, to a certain degree of perfection. This is what St. Paul sets forth, when he says, *He that is just, let him become more and more just; and he that is holy, let him become more and more holy*. Although it should be the chief care and business of every individual to do so at all times, yet it is more particularly so in the season of Advent, which we are now entering upon, as this season is particularly allotted for that purpose by the Church. As even the most regular livers, punctual and faithful to their duty, are very apt, in process of time, to slacken in their devotion and fidelity to God, from the cares and solitudes of this world, it was necessary to lay out certain seasons of the year, in which the faithful may gain what they had lost, and improve their virtue to higher degrees of perfection, by a particular application to acts of religion and righteousness. This is what the Church has in view. Let me therefore beseech you, as St. Paul did his disciples, *Be ye renewed in spirit*; apply yourselves at present to the practices of piety, with new eagerness and fervency of spirit; become more assiduous at prayer, more humble in
your

your deportment, more charitable to your neighbour, and more fervent in the service of God; for thus only will you comply with the zealous and wholesome views of the Church, in preparing the way of the Lord, and removing the obstructions that hitherto prevented the spiritual birth of Christ within your souls. You are not only to perform your usual devotions and good works, but perform them with more attention, more devotion, more alacrity and chearfulness, and, finally, with more ardent desires of pleasing God, and keeping yourselves always united unto him. This is what the Apostle calls *putting on Christ Jesus*; because it is following his spirit, his maxims, and his ways; and, likewise, because it may be justly said of one who behaves in this christian-like manner, as St. Paul used to say of himself, *It is not so much I that live, as Christ Jesus that liveth within me.*

Let us, therefore, put on a firm resolution of *making straight the paths of the Lord*, during this holy season, by a particular application to the duties, the exercises of virtue and religion.---If we do, Christ will certainly visit us; and not only visit, but be born spiritually within us, and so dwell with us by his holy grace. *If any one will love me, says Christ Jesus, he shall be loved by my Father, and we both will come and dwell in him.* This is the happy situation to which I wish to lead you, Christians: a situation that makes us the friends of God, the favourites of Heaven, and living members of our mystical head, Christ Jesus: a situation that unites us to Christ by grace: and possessed of his holy grace, we become possessed of an infallible earnest of Eternal Happiness. *Amen.*

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

JOH^N, mentioned in the Gospel this day, was the precursor or forerunner of Christ, of whom Isaiah says, *Behold I send my Angel before thy face, who shall prepare thy way before thee.* He was called the Baptist, because of the baptism of penance he had preached in Judea, before Christ Jesus had assumed his public character among the Jews, and because he had the happiness of conferring this same baptism upon the Saviour of Mankind. As he was to announce and make known Christ Jesus in the world, he was endowed with the greatest gifts of Heaven, and raised by Almighty God to a most eminent sanctity; insomuch, that Christ Jesus declares, *there had not risen a greater man than John the Baptist amongst the children of women.* Yet with all his sanctity, with all the advantages of being the forerunner of the Messiah, and the person who had pointed HIM out publicly as *the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world,* how is he treated by the world? With the greatest severity imaginable: as we learn from the Gospel this day, that John the Baptist was languishing in prison in heavy chains, whilst the meanest and most worthless part of the creation enjoyed the blessings of ease, opulence, liberty, and life. How unsearchable are thy judgments, O my God, in the sufferings of thy Angel John!

This single passage shews you, Christians, how opposite the judgments of God are, to those of men. What the world generally esteems and applauds, is an abomination in the eyes of God; and what is most valuable in the eyes of God, is often an object of contempt in the opinion of men. No one ever possessed greater excellencies than John the Baptist, yet no one ever met with more cruelty or injustice from the world. On what account? Because he had the courage and resolution to discharge his duty, in the public character of minister to the Most High God, and reproach

Herod

Herod openly with living incestuously with his brother's wife. This was sufficient to exasperate that haughty and imperious prince to the highest degree, and draw upon himself the heaviest calamities. Herod, unable to bear the well-grounded reproach of John, ordered him immediately to be taken up and thrown into a dark and loathsome place of confinement, loaded with iron chains. Had John the Baptist been governed by the maxims of the world, or *the prudence of the flesh*, as St. Paul calls it, he would have taken special care not to give the least offence to Herod, or expose himself to his resentment; but he was the minister of God, governed by the spirit of God, and consequently would discharge his duty at the risk of his liberty, or of his life. When John suffered, innocence suffered; but being innocent, and more like an angel than a man, therefore he must suffer. All ye that are oppressed and loaden listen to that; listen to St. Paul, *all those who mean to live piously in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution*; and again, he says of himself, *were I to please man, I should not be a servant of Christ*. Great, indeed, should be the consolation of those, who have the courage to oppose and rise up against the corrupted maxims of the world, that whilst they are hated, or even despised, by man, they are in the greatest favour with Almighty God. For you will observe, that our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ made it particularly his business to give John the Baptist the public praises and commendations his zeal deserved, setting him above not only all those whose rank entitled them to live at the courts of princes, but likewise above all the holy Prophets that ever lived. Hence you may judge how much more reasonable, more equitable, and more advantageous it is to please the Almighty God, rather than a mortal man. *Do not fear those*, says Christ Jesus in the Gospel, *that kill the body, but rather fear him, who can destroy both body and soul*.

You may imagine, perhaps, Christians, that the obligation of opposing sins that are scandalous or injurious to the honour and glory of God, is confined to the ministers of God alone. No: the same obligation extends to all the faithful in general, in

many occurrences of life. *He that is not with me, says Christ Jesus our Lord, is against me; and again, He that doth not gather, scattereth.* St. Paul declares, *that God gave every man his neighbour in charge.* This is what divines call the obligation of fraternal correction, or the obligation we lie under of reprimanding our brethren, as often as they transgress the laws of God in our presence. In consequence of this obligation, we are all bound in conscience, to correct those that live under our care, over whom we have any authority. Thus a parent is always obliged to check and correct his children, as often as they violate the laws of God in his presence; and a master, his domesticks and servants. In virtue of the same obligation, we are likewise bound in conscience to reprimand our equals, with decency, gentleness and charity; should they do or advance any thing before us inconsistent with the principles of religion, moderation or justice. We are further bound in conscience, even with regard to those of a superior rank, never to countenance or chime with their sinful ways or discourses; but rather shew, by our silence, or a certain seriousness, or even sternness in our looks, that we can by no means approve of their conduct and maxims. How far does this principle prevail in the world? Is it not the general maxim to let every man do as he pleases; to create no enemies for ourselves; to join with whatever company you are in, although the discourse were pointed at religion, at modesty, or the honor and reputation of a virtuous neighbour. What can the end of such principles be? We may thereby obtain the good will of man; but we certainly incur the displeasure of God, and not only incur his displeasure, but make ourselves liable to all the effects of his wrath.

St. John the Baptist was not satisfied with opposing every thing that was injurious to the honour and glory of God, but likewise endeavoured to promote that glory to the utmost of his power. For, the moment he had heard of the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples to make a public enquiry about him; in order to have an opportunity of manifesting him unto the Jews, as the Messiah promised unto and expected by

by the people of Israel. The question his disciples asked in public was this; *Art thou he that is to come? Or are we to expect another?* To which our Saviour answered, *Go and tell John what you have heard and seen. The blind see, the lame walk, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, and the poor have the Gospel preached unto them.*—This was telling them in reality, and all the multitude along with them, that he was the true Messiah; as it clearly follows from these words, that he appeared in all the characters the Messiah had been represented by the Prophet Isaias, 35th ch. *Be ye comforted, and do not fear: Behold God himself shall come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf disclosed. Then the lame shall skip about and exult, as a light-footed deer. Then the tongues of the mute shall be loosened and set at liberty.* These were great and distinguishing marks indeed—marks that were plainly and visibly discernible in Christ Jesus at that period, when he was performing the very works foretold by the Prophet, before multitudes of people, even in the sight or hearing of all Judea. But what effect had these works upon those that were witnesses thereunto? The disciples of John were convinced thereby that Christ Jesus was the true Messiah; but the rest remained wilfully in their blindness: for which reason our blessed Saviour added these remarkable words; *happy is he that shall not be scandalized in me*: happy is he, who does not occasion by his own prejudices, and because I appear obscure in the eyes of the world, his own destruction, by rejecting me, or disavowing me, as the Redeemer of Mankind. How was it possible the Jews could have mistaken or could have refused to acknowledge Christ Jesus as the Redeemer of Mankind? It was owing to their obstinacy, and the false notions they entertained of the Saviour promised unto Israel. For as the Prophets had foretold, that the Messiah would be great, and wise, and powerful, and extend his empire to the remotest boundaries of the earth; which was only to be understood in a spiritual light, and of the spiritual empire which Christ Jesus was to obtain, by the Christian religion, over all the nations upon earth; the Jews, who were extremely terrestrial, understood

those Prophecies in a terrestrial light, and consequently expected the Messiah would come in all the power and glory of this world; and by his superior power and glory restore the kingdom of Israel to all its former splendor, and even carry it to a higher point of splendor than ever it had attained to before. This was their error and the source of their misfortunes. For when they could descry nothing in Christ Jesus of what they expected; when instead of the great and mighty conqueror, and restorer of Israel, they could see nothing but a man, who had been bred, and chose to live in obscurity and humiliation, they immediately rejected and disclaimed him publicly; which was rejecting and disclaiming him, who was to be chiefly and principally the redemption and salvation of Israel, according to the promises made unto their fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; and next to Israel, the redemption and salvation of all mankind. *Happy is the man that shall not be scandalized in me.*

How many, dear Christians, amongst ourselves are daily scandalized in Christ Jesus? that is, that daily reject, I do not say himself, but his laws, his maxims, his examples? We willingly acknowledge him for the Saviour of the World; but do we willingly submit to the saving maxims of his holy law? The maxims of humility, self-denial, disinterestedness, poverty of spirit, piety and godliness which he has laid down? Here we are scandalized in Christ in neglecting these maxims. In this sense is Christ Jesus even to many of his own disciples a sign of contradiction. The cross of Christ considered in this light, is no less a scandal to the Christians of our days, than it was formerly to the Jews. With pleasure we see Christ Jesus in his glorious transfiguration; but how reluctantly do we view him in the humiliations and ignominious scenes of his passion? With pleasure we hear him discoursing of the eternal glory and happiness that are prepared for his faithful disciples in the kingdom of Heaven; but with what reluctance do we hear him preaching up the severe maxims of his law—*crucifying our flesh with all its concupiscences and sensual appetites?* One thing however is certain, Christians mark me well, that we can
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never share in the redemption of Christ Jesus, if we be scandalized in him—if we refuse either to acknowledge him as our God and our redeemer, or to follow and comply with the austere laws he has laid down for us; because these are the conditions, the only necessary and indispensable conditions, on which he has promised his followers, to make them for ever happy in the kingdom of Heaven. It is of the last consequence, therefore, to us, to acknowledge Christ Jesus and fulfill his holy laws and maxims; because this, and this alone, will make him truly a redeemer to us, by granting us forgiveness of our sins in this life, and eternal happiness in the next. *Amen.*

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

FROM the many extraordinary things the Jews had heard of St. John the Baptist, some of them fancied he might be the Messiah promised unto Israel; for which reason they sent him a solemn deputation, to know who he was, or what he was; *whether it was he that was to come, or if they were to expect another?* To these different questions St. John made so many different answers, and told the deputies of the Jews, that he neither was the Messiah nor a Prophet (for his humility was too great to consider himself in that light) and that the Messiah promised unto Israel was no longer to be expected, inasmuch as *he was in reality amongst them, although they knew him not.* The deputies of the Synagogue, or Head Council of the Jews, still urged him to declare what he was? he made him this final answer, *I am the voice of one crying in the desert, make straight the ways of the Lord, as the Prophet Isaiah said.* Before Christ Jesus would vouchsafe to appear in his public character, and manifest himself unto the Jews, as the Messiah promised unto their forefathers, St. John the Baptist was commissioned from Heaven to prepare his ways before him; to announce unto the people that he would immediately appear, and to pre-
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pare and dispose their minds and hearts to acknowledge and receive him. What did this preparation consist in, with regard to the Jews? In making straight the way of the Lord; in laying aside their prejudices, their false and erroneous principles, and thereby to dispose themselves to follow faithfully the heavenly light that should shine before them.

This was the commission of St. John; and as the Advent is intended to prepare us for the coming of Christ in his Nativity, the Church commissions her ministers to admonish the faithful on this day, in the words of John, *make straight the ways of the Lord*; remove every obstacle that may prevent Christ Jesus from coming into our hearts, and visiting us with his holy grace. The ways of the Lord are the ways that lead unto the Lord: truth, justice and godliness. These ways are essentially straight in themselves; but these ways, essentially straight and direct in themselves, may, and not only may, but frequently are, rendered crooked and oblique, by our own perverseness; by the false and erroneous principles we adopt, and the sinful ways we pursue. These obstacles, therefore, Christians, it is necessary to remove, in order to make straight the ways of the Lord, or in order to enter into the ways that lead directly unto the Lord. Whilst we follow false and erroneous principles, it is plain we abandon the ways of truth; and whilst we follow sinful ways, it is plain we abandon the ways of justice: consequently we abandon the straight and direct ways of the Lord. Therefore, to rectify our ways, or make straight the ways of the Lord, it is necessary we lay aside the false principles we follow, and forsake the sinful ways we pursue: otherwise Christ Jesus will never visit us with his holy grace, nor make us partakers of eternal happiness. But what are these false and erroneous principles that render the ways of the Lord, which are essentially straight and direct in themselves, crooked and oblique?—1st, Principles of worldliness. The first way of the Lord is that fundamental law and maxim of Christ Jesus, *seek the kingdom of Heaven before all things*. Did we pursue steadily this first, straight, and unerring way of the Lord, we should

should reject and despise all the interests of the world, the moment they come in competition with our salvation, and decline any advantage that could be compassed but by a crime. In opposition to this first essential principle of religion, people generally set up another, which is this, to make the most of the world; to employ their whole time in encreasing their fortune, although, in the mean time, they should entirely neglect the care of their salvation; to embrace every offer fortune may throw in their way, though ever so sinful in the execution. The same might be said of the spirit of pride, the spirit of ambition, the spirit of sensuality and revenge, which reign universally in the world, than which nothing can be more opposite to the humility, self-denial and forgiveness, which are strictly enjoined by the laws of Christ. Therefore, to prepare our souls for the coming of the Lord, it is necessary we forsake the distorted ways our passions have engaged us in, and return to the plain and direct ways that infallibly lead to Heaven.-- 2d, What renders the ways of the Lord distorted and oblique is a false conscience, or a principle by which many people endeavour to justify unto themselves what is really criminal in the eyes of God. This is undoubtedly the most dreadful situation any one can be in. While one's conscience is clear, and, if I may say, enlightened, while he accounts that right which is really right, and that sinful which is really sinful, there is no reason to despair of his salvation, as he may repent one time or other, and return sincerely unto the Lord; but there can be no hopes of that person, whose conscience is false and erroneous, or of the man who persuades himself that a thing is lawful, which is really criminal and unwarrantable in the eyes of God. For, as knowing and acknowledging our faults is the very first step to repentance, it is plain that man can never repent, who neither knows nor acknowledges his faults, nor, consequently, can have any expectation of eternal happiness. *If thine eye be clear, says our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, thy whole body will be enlightened, but if thine eye be dark, thy whole body will be darkened.* Now the eye of the soul is conscience, as it is con-

science

science that directs the soul in her operations, by pointing out what is right and what is wrong. If, therefore, this conscience be dark, or governed by erroneous principles, it is plain nothing but works of darkness, and consequently works of perdition, can ensue.

But is it enough to excuse any man in the eyes of God, that he thinks his own actions and principles lawful and just? No: it is not. For the wise man declares, *there is a way which seemeth straight unto man, yet ends in perdition*; and the reason why it should be so, is this, that the rectitude or lawfulness of our actions doth not depend entirely on our own thoughts or notions, but rather on their conformity with the laws of God; if, therefore, our actions be not conformable to the laws of God, we are certainly criminal in his sight, let our own thoughts of them be ever so favourable. Is it not enough, I say again, that a man thinks his own actions and principles lawful and just? No, Christians, it is not. Because there is a false and erroneous conscience, as well as a right and clear conscience: therefore the testimony of conscience is not always an infallible rule. Were conscience always governed by reason and religion, then indeed it should be a true and unerring guide. But as it is pliable into any shape or form, frequently biassed by prejudice, and often warped by interest; insomuch that we frequently and easily convince ourselves, that whatever we earnestly wish for is just and holy. St. Augustine says, "The testimony of conscience is, upon many occasions, a false and destructive guide." How then shall a man know when his conscience is right, and the testimony of his conscience to be depended on? It is thus: when the testimony of his conscience is conformable to the maxims of Christ, and the doctrine of the Church of Christ. For a further explanation of this principle, which is undoubtedly one of the most considerable, and most extensive principles of religion, you must observe, the law of Christ contains manifold obligations, all essential in their respective kinds. Some are so very clear and easy to be understood as to need no explication; others are more difficult and obscure in their

their nature. As for the clear and manifest obligations of the law, there is no one of any reason but sees when and how far they oblige in conscience; but of the deeper and more intricate points of the law, every man is not a competent judge. Here, or in points of this kind, it is necessary to have recourse to, and consult the doctors of the Church, as appears from the words of Christ Jesus in the Gospel, *the Scribes and Pharisees are seated upon the Chair of Moses; do ye therefore observe what they say or deliver unto you.*

If, therefore, Christians, in the material transactions of life, where the law of God may interfere and come in question, people neglect consulting the masters in Israel—the doctors of the Church; or if designedly they consult such as they think are ready and willing from their ignorance, complaisance, or any private interest, to favour or indulge their passions; if, in fine, any man undertake to set up his own private opinion, in opposition to the opinion of the Church, with regard to the lawfulness or unlawfulness of any practice, that man is certainly reprov'd in the eyes of God, and must be ever excluded from the glory of Heaven, because, as St. John says, *he hath loved darkness more than light.*

What has a man of this character to do? To make straight his ways in the presence of the Lord: to adopt no other principles but those of Christ; to follow no other ways but the ways of Christ; to be governed by no other opinion but the opinion of the Church of Christ. It will avail a man nothing at the tribunal of Christ, that he fancied he was doing right, while he was actually transgressing the most material points of the law. Will not Christ Jesus object upon that occasion, that he was not his own guide; inasmuch as there were teachers, and doctors, and pastors established in his Church, as St. Paul declares, to direct and instruct him in the ways of Heaven? Will he not make him sensible, that if he fancied he was doing right, it was owing to an excessive and passionate love of the world, which blinded him so far as to hinder him from seeing the light, or taking any pains to discover it? Will he not reproach him with having been
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ever afraid of discovering the truth, lest he should be thereby disturbed in his criminal practices, or thereby deprived of a share of the perishable interests of this world? Will he not convince him, that as often as he was told the truth by the ministers of Christ, either in public or private, he rejected it with disdain, always preferring his own private erroneous opinion, to the general, true, and unerring opinion of the church of Christ; because his own erroneous opinion, favored his interest and his passions, whilst the other condemned both the one and the other, as they were entirely inconsistent with the true interests of his soul? This is certainly what will pass one day, at the tribunal of Christ, with regard to those whose ways are not straight in the presence of the Lord. Let us therefore beseech the Almighty, to renew a spirit of rectitude within our bowels; a spirit of truth; a spirit of docility and fidelity to the law; a spirit that may induce us to prepare effectually the ways of the Lord, by removing every obstacle to salvation, and fulfilling faithfully every duty, the observation whereof is necessary towards attaining the possession of eternal happiness in the kingdom of Heaven. *Amen.*

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

AS the Advent was instituted by the Church to prepare the faithful for the coming of Christ Jesus in his Nativity, so it ends or closes with that part of the Gospel which announces the approaching Nativity of Christ: *every one shall see the Salvation sent from God.* Now this happened; Christians, when the only begotten Son of God was born visibly amongst us, for the redemption and salvation of mankind. This was the happy period foretold by the Prophets, which was to draw down the greatest blessings upon mankind in general. This was the happy period all the holy Patriarchs and Saints of the Old Law had been wishing and longing for with the most vehement desires, frequently

quently calling upon the Heavens to open and the Holy One to come down, *the expectation of nations, and the desire of mankind.*

What necessity, Christians, was there for a Messiah or a Redeemer? To conceive this point, which is undoubtedly the foundation and ground-work of religion, you must know, that Almighty God, after creating the first parents of all mankind, assured them that they and their posterity should be made completely and eternally happy in the kingdom of Heaven, after enjoying many great and considerable blessings upon Earth, for some time, provided they proved faithful to his divine laws; which laws were then no other than the worship and love due to the Divine Majesty, and abstaining from the forbidden fruit; which laws of worship and love were engraved in their hearts, and the law of abstaining from the forbidden fruit, expressly and positively specified unto them. Had they continued faithful unto God, he would undoubtedly have fulfilled his promise unto them; but as they transgressed his laws, they lost and forfeited every title to the promise which had been made to them. In consequence of this forfeiture, Adam and Eve, and all their guilty posterity, were excluded for ever from the happiness they had been destined for; and also condemned to the severest punishments---to sickness, sufferings, death, and to all the evils and calamities of this life. These were the deplorable effects of one sin! and in this condition they must have remained for ever, had not Almighty God, in his great mercy, promised unto Adam, a Saviour, by whose merits they should not only be redeemed from sin and the penalties of sin, but likewise restored to their former privileges and rights to eternal happiness. It was not in the power of man, weak, imperfect and sinful as he was, to make the proper satisfaction or atonement for the injury the Divine Majesty had received in the violation of his laws.—No: As the injury was infinitely great, it could not properly be atoned for but by a mediator of infinite merit. As the injury was offered to the most sacred Majesty of God, it required the interposition of no less than the Son of God to make a full and complet

compleat satisfaction, such a satisfaction as God the Father could not refuse accepting of.

But could not Adam and Eve have repented after their fall, and thereby have obtained forgiveness from Almighty God? No, Christians, they could not; because repentance derives all its force and efficacy, all its merits, from the merits of Christ, and the promise Almighty God had made of granting forgiveness upon repentance, through the merits of Christ. If, therefore, a redeemer had not been promised, repentance could have been of no value or significance unto man. But this redeemer, so necessary for the reparation of the injury that had been offered to God in the violation of his laws, and so necessary for the reparation of the many great and considerable evils which had fallen upon man, and his posterity for ever, in consequence of his first transgression or prevarication, the Almighty was most graciously pleased to promise immediately after the fall of Adam and Eve: For addressing the serpent, who had seduced Eve to violate and transgress the divine command, he said: *I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed; and she shall bruise thy head to pieces.* That is, of a woman should be born a redeemer, who should destroy the power or empire of the infernal spirit, who had tempted Eve, under the form of a serpent, and had been thereby instrumental to the ruin and destruction of mankind. The same promise was renewed to Abraham, after the Almighty had chosen him for the father and head of a large people, who should serve him in spirit and truth, with this additional circumstance, that the Messiah should be born of his race: For the Lord assured him, *all nations of the earth shall be blessed in him*; in the Messiah, who was to be one of his descendants. It was further renewed to Jacob, grandson of Abraham, with some general indications of the time when the Messiah was to appear. For this Patriarch, after giving his blessing at his death unto his children, was seized with a prophetic spirit, and said, *The sceptre, or supreme power, shall not be taken out of the tribe of Juda, nor shall a commander be wanting in his race, till He that is to be sent, (the Messiah)*
shall

shall come; and he shall be the expectation of nations. From this prophecy it appears, that the Messiah was to come, when the sceptre or supreme power should be no longer in the house or tribe of Juda. This was exactly the case when Christ appeared on earth; for then the supreme power was not in the house or tribe of Juda, or in the hands of any Jew, but in the hands of a stranger—of Herod, who was an Idumean, an alien, and who, though no Jew, yet was made king of Judea by the Romans, who had conquered it under Pompey the Great.

The same great and important promise of a Messiah, or redeemer, was renewed in all the prophecies, from age to age, but especially in that of Daniel, during the captivity in Babylon. After the Jews had abandoned the Almighty and the observance of his holy laws, he gave them up a prey to their enemy, the king of Babylon, who after a long and oppressive war, took and destroyed Jerusalem and its temple, and led the Jews and their king captives to Babylon, where they remained in captivity seventy-two years. During this period—a period of severity and punishment—the Almighty did not entirely forget his people; as he sent Prophets to comfort them, to animate their courage and keep alive their expectations of deliverance. Among these was the Prophet Daniel, who frequently assured them, their captivity should soon be at an end; and advised them to prepare the roads for their return to Jerusalem, the only object of their ardent wishes, as it was the holy city to which Almighty God was pleased to grant a special protection, and where he held a visible converse or intercourse with his own people. With a view to their immediate return to Jerusalem, the Prophet admonished the Jews to prepare the roads before hand, saying *every hill shall be levelled, and every valley shall be filled up*, as we read in the Gospel of this day; which passage is taken word for word out of the Prophet Daniel. He was not content with assuring the Jews they should soon be released from their captivity in Babylon, but likewise signified unto them the time of the redemption promised unto Israel, of which their deliverance from
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the captivity of Babylon was only a figure. In his 9th ch. the Prophet says, *before seventy weeks* (in the language of scripture, a week here means seven years) *are expired, there shall be an end to prevarication and sin; Iniquity shall be destroyed; The Eternal Justice shall come into the world; The prophecies shall be fulfilled, and the Holy of Holies shall be anointed.* This term of years, foretold by the Prophet, agrees exactly with the time wherein Christ Jesus appeared in the world, as all chronologers are agreed.

From the whole history of religion it appears that the belief and expectation of a redeemer, was the most essential and fundamental point of religion, from the very beginning of the world. As now there is no salvation to be expected, but by believing the Messiah is come; so likewise there was no salvation before the coming of Christ, but by believing he was to come, and fulfilling the law—the law of reason or the law of nature, until the time of Moses; and by fulfilling from his time the written or Mosaic law, until the coming of Christ, who instituted and established the new law or dispensation. As now we expect and obtain salvation by believing the Messiah is come, and fulfilling his holy laws; so likewise before the coming of Christ, salvation was expected and obtained by believing the Messiah was to come. This is certainly the most beautiful, the most instructive and the most comfortable part of our holy religion; from which two things are to be inferred: first, to be extremely thankful to Almighty God for having granted to mankind, even in preference to the angels, who were involved in like guilt and misfortunes, a divine redeemer, by whose merits we have been redeemed from the bondage of Satan, which our first parents brought upon their whole race; and which they must for ever have continued in, had not our divine redeemer Christ Jesus come forward, and by his sufferings and death reconciled mankind with his father, by atoning or satisfying for their guilt.—Secondly, to take especial care, not to defeat or frustrate the merciful views of God, by neglecting to fulfill the conditions he requires at our hands—the observance of his holy laws. For although we are
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all truly redeemed in Christ, yet we will not all be partakers of the entire benefits of our redemption in Christ, eternal happiness; because this eternal happiness is not promised to all those that are redeemed; but to those who after being redeemed shall fulfill the law; or after transgressing some points of the law, shall sincerely repent and return unto the Lord. For this end, and for this alone, was St. John the Baptist ordered from Heaven, before Christ Jesus would appear publicly in the world, to go and preach the baptism of penance unto the people: to exhort them strenuously to repentance; assuring them that as their bodies were cleansed and purified by him in the waters of the river Jordan, so their sins should be washed away in the presence of the Lord by repentance, through the merits of the Messiah, who was immediately to make his appearance amongst them.

Hence, divines conclude, there are but two ways of attaining eternal happiness; the way of innocence, and the way of repentance. The way of innocence belongs to those, who, after baptism, depart this life, having retained their baptismal innocence unto the end. But the way of repentance is the common and general way: because there are very few, if any at all, who die in possession of the innocence they acquired in their baptism, after attaining the use of reason. This is, therefore, the way we should all pursue. It is the only way open for us, to attain the possession of Heaven. But let us remember, that repentance necessarily implies three things: the first a true and sincere sorrow for having offended Almighty God, for the past; an application to the sacrament of penance, accompanied by a change of life, for the present; and a firm resolution for the time to come of never offending Almighty God, by transgressing mortally any one of his laws, for any consideration or upon any account whatever. Without these conditions there can be no true repentance, nor consequently any pretensions to share in the redemption of Christ. On the other hand, *if we level every hill*;—if we break down our passions and reduce them to the obedience of God's holy law, *if we fill up every valley*—if by our future good works, works of patience, works of charity,

works

works of meekness and humility, we manifest our sincere love of God, and sorrow for having ever offended him, we shall assuredly partake in the full benefits of the redemption of Christ Jesus our Lord—mercy here, and eternal mercies—eternal joys and blessings hereafter. *Amen.*

THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST.

ALTHOUGH Almighty God was pleased to promise a redeemer to mankind, by whose merits they should be saved from sin and the eternal punishments due to sin, and likewise restored to their primitive right to the kingdom of Heaven, immediately after the fall of our first parents, yet the promise was not fulfilled or carried into execution, until many ages after it was made; that all mankind might thereby become sensible of their own misery and weakness, and wish for the redeemer they expected with greater eagerness.

It was "*in the plenitude of time,*" as St. Paul expresses it; that is, when the compleat time was come of shewing mercy unto mankind, that the only begotten Son of God was born in Bethlehem, a little town near Jerusalem, after taking human nature upon him in the womb of the blessed Virgin through the operation of the Holy Ghost.

Augustus Cæsar, the Roman Emperor, having published an edict, that all the subjects of the empire should be enrolled, the Jews, (whose country, Judea, was then a Roman province) were obliged to obey the law; conformably to which, Mary, and Joseph, her reputed husband, travelled in the midst of winter from Nazareth, a little town in Gallilee, where they lived, to Bethlehem, to give in their names, and be enrolled. It was here that Mary brought forth the Son of God and redeemer of mankind in a deserted and obscure stable, whither she was obliged to repair, there being no room, the Gospel says, in the inns or public houses of the town, which were all occupied by the
multitudes

multitudes that came to have their names registered, according to the emperor's command.

Can any thing, Christians, be more astonishing than to see the Maker of Heaven, and Lord of all things, the Son of God and redeemer of mankind, reduced to dwell in a dark and obscure stable, at his very first appearance in the world? He that fills the Heavens with his glory is now confined to a most miserable habitation. Is this owing to chance or design? undoubtedly it was intended for our instruction and improvement, as we shall shortly see. In the mean time Almighty God was not wanting to manifest the unequalled greatness of his Son; even while he lay unnoticed, and, as if abandoned, in a most despicable retreat; For we read in the Gospel this day, that *while certain shepherds were watching their flocks by night, they perceived a heavenly light spreading and diffusing itself around, which filled them with fear and apprehensions: Then the Angel of the Lord said unto them, fear not; for behold I bring unto you tidings of great joy, which shall be to all the people; because this day is born to you a Saviour, who is CHRIST THE LORD, in the city of David: And this shall be a sign to you—you shall find an infant wrapt in swaddling cloaths, and laid in a manger.* Immediately after these words, was heard a melodious concert of celestial spirits in the air, giving praise to God, and saying, *Glory to God in the highest Heavens, and on earth peace to men of good will.*

What notion, Christians, must these happy shepherds have conceived of the new-born infant they were informed of, from the extraordinary appearances they had been witnesses to? And what must that infant be, whose birth the very powers of Heaven were ordered to publish to mankind, in the most solemn manner, and with the greatest demonstrations of joy? As soon as the Angels departed, the shepherds said unto each other, *Let us go as far as Bethlehem, and see this word which was made, and which the Lord hath shewn unto us; and actually they went with speed, and found Mary and Joseph, and the infant laid in a manger.*

'Tis easy to conceive the awful and religious sentiments which must have arisen in the hearts of those shepherds, the moment they perceived the infant
Jesus,

Jesus, laid in the very situation the angels had described. With what joy did they behold that infant God, who was one day to release them from the slavery of sin, the everlasting torments of Hell, to make them partakers of all the joys and glory of the kingdom of Heaven! With what gratitude did they acknowledge the extraordinary favour that was shewn them in particular, as being the first of mankind informed of the birth of the Redeemer of mankind!

But, the better to conceive these sentiments, let us go, in spirit, to Bethlehem, with the shepherds mentioned in the Gospel of this day, and *behold the Word that was made---the Word of God made flesh*, for the salvation of mankind. Let us humbly adore, in spirit, the Son of God, upon his appearance in the world, and consider attentively the infinite bounty of God, who, though infinitely happy in himself, from his own essential and eternal felicity, was pleased to come down from Heaven and take our nature upon him, to enable him to suffer and die, and, by suffering and dying on the cross, reconcile mankind with his Almighty Father, and thereby entitle them to the possession of Heaven, whence they were excluded since the fall and prevarication of the first parent of mankind.

Such considerations must necessarily inspire that gratitude and love for Christ Jesus which seem peculiar to the mystery of his birth; for, of all the mysteries of his life, this is the most moving, the most endearing, the most capable of inspiring the greatest confidence and love. Else, where he appears in the character of a God, the splendor of his miracles, the Divine Majesty that always shone forth in his appearance and actions, are apter to create the deepest awe and veneration, than confidence and love. But in his nativity he appears, in some measure, divested of the divinity, and under such forms and circumstances as must encourage the most timorous souls—solitude, obscurity, infancy, and weakness. Let us, therefore, Christians, confidently approach this infant God in his cradle, and, after adoring him in spirit, as the Son of God and Saviour of the world, humbly beseech

befeech him to be a Saviour unto ourselves. It is for our salvation he is born: our salvation will likewise be the happy fruit of his birth, provided we comply with the instructions he has given us even in his birth.

For Christ Jesus, even in his cradle, preaches aloud, as the Holy Fathers observe, with a strong, persuasive, though silent, voice, the great, important, and saving truths he afterwards delivered publicly unto the world; namely—humility, self-denial, and poverty of spirit. And, 1st, What can be more remarkable than the humility of Christ Jesus, even in his very birth? Master as he was of the whole creation, he could have easily chosen the most noble palace, or splendid habitation, for the place of his birth. He was better pleased to come into the world in a deserted and obscure stable, without the least shew, figure, or ostentation; in order, undoubtedly, to cure us of a certain spirit of pride and ambition which reigns universally in the world, and makes people set the greatest value upon the honours and distinctions of this life, which are of little or no value in themselves, and most commonly the greatest obstacle to their salvation. From his cradle, therefore, does Jesus cry aloud, as he did afterwards in his public character, *Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart.* What an instance of self-denial and mortification did Christ Jesus exhibit, even in his birth! Every circumstance must undoubtedly have added to his sufferings upon this occasion:—the inclemency of the season, the depth of winter; the hour of midnight—as the scripture says, while the night was rolling on, in the very midst of her rapid course the Omnipotent Word of God broke forth from the celestial seats above, and appeared in human nature upon earth; add to this the many hardships he must have laboured under at that tender age, from the very situation of the open, bleak, and miserable stable he was born in.—How justly, then, could this divine Redeemer preach up afterwards self-denial unto his disciples, saying, *If any one will be my disciple, let him deny himself,* after he had himself thus practised the

greatest self-denial and abnegation, from the very first moment of his life.

What poverty did Christ Jesus appear in at his first coming into this world! Was he not pleased to see himself deprived, upon this occasion, of the most necessary accommodations---such accommodations as the poorest people upon earth are entitled to, and generally supplied with! Mary could not find room in the inn, the Gospel says, and not finding room, she is obliged to retire to the first place she met with, which was no other but a stable! here she brings forth the Son of God, the Redeemer of Mankind. But from the very nature and situation of the place, what wants and necessities must have ensued! All the place could supply, was, a bad covering, a poor manger, and a slender portion of straw.—These were all the riches the Son of God possessed on his entrance into the world. For which reason St. Paul says, *he that was rich by nature, made himself poor, for the love of mankind.*

Christ Jesus was not only pleased to come poor into the world, but has likewise made poverty sacred in his person, as the holy Fathers observe: For who was it, Christians, the Almighty God first informed of the birth of Christ? The poor shepherds that were watching their flocks during the night; and that in preference to all the great, and rich, and opulent men that were then living upon the earth. Who was it, besides, that Christ Jesus promised his kingdom to in a most particular manner? The poor: for he says, *happy are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.* Finally, What is the condition, the essential condition Christ Jesus requires of his disciples, to entitle them to the Kingdom of Heaven? Poverty of spirit: for he says, in the Gospel, *no one can be my disciple that will not renounce all that he has.* Not, in fact, by throwing away his substance, or fortune, but by renouncing it in spirit; that is, by disengaging his heart and affections from all the wealth and riches in the world.

But how far do these examples and maxims of Christ Jesus prevail in the world? Notwithstanding
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the real poverty he was born in, notwithstanding the poverty of spirit he commands and requires, is it not the riches and wealth of this world that even the Christians of our days are mostly desirous of, and labour for with the greatest application and eagerness of desire?

Notwithstanding it must be admitted, as St. Bernard argues upon this subject, that either Christ Jesus or the world is mistaken: but it can never be supposed that Christ Jesus, who is the essential and eternal wisdom of God, can be mistaken, therefore it must be the world that is mistaken, in the value men set upon, and the indefatigable ardour with which they pursue, the wealth and riches of this world. One single view of the stable in which Christ Jesus was born, the shreds he was covered with, and the manger wherein he was laid, proves this truth to a demonstration. Let us, therefore, learn, from the example of Christ Jesus, even in his birth, to rectify the false notions of the world, and adopt the notions and maxims of Christ. Let us never forget, that this divine Redeemer was, in his nativity, a complete pattern of humility, self-denial, and poverty of spirit, which are the fundamental virtues of Christianity. Let us not only learn to know and distinguish those great and necessary virtues, but likewise practise them, in imitation of Christ. If we do, we may justly say, with the Angel of the Lord, *there is a Saviour born unto us, who is Christ our Lord*; by whose merits we shall be saved from sin, the punishment due to sin, and likewise put in possession of the Kingdom of Heaven. *Amen.*

THE CIRCUMCISION.

AS this is, Christians, one of the greatest festivals of the year, a festival dedicated to the name of Christ Jesus, it is very proper we should enquire into, and be informed of every thing relating thereto. Now what chiefly concerns this festival is contained in the Gospel of this day, which tells us, that *when eight days were ended, the child was circumcised, and the name of Jesus given unto him.* But what was circumcision? It was the first ceremony among the Jews, instituted by God himself, when he directed Abraham to circumcise himself, his family, and all his posterity, as an everlasting mark of the covenant he had made with him; for we read in the seventeenth chapter of Genesis these remarkable words, *And God said unto Abraham, thou shalt keep my covenant, thou, and thy seed after thee, in their generations. This is my covenant, which ye shall keep between me and you, and thy seed after thee: Every man child among you shall be circumcised; and he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you. And my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.* From these words it appears, 1st, that circumcision was ordained by Almighty God; 2dly, that it regarded the male children alone, who were to be circumcised eight days after they were born; 3dly, that it was a token of strict alliance which Almighty God was pleased to contract with Abraham and his posterity; insomuch, that without circumcision no one was looked on as of the chosen people of God; for the Almighty adds these words in the same chapter, *and the uncircumcised male child, whose flesh is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from my people: he hath broken my covenant.*

Now, Christians, as it was a point and obligation of the law to be circumcised, Christ Jesus (who came not to dissolve the law, but to fulfil it, even to the least tittle, as he declares himself in the Gospel,) would not but submit to the law of circumcision; for which
reason

reason we read in this day's Gospel, that after the eight days were over, the child was circumcised, and his name called Jesus.

As in the new law, or dispensation, it is customary to give names unto children at their baptism, so it was in the Old Law at the time of circumcision; for which reason the Son of God had his name likewise given him at that time. But what name, Christians? The most august name that ever was; a name dictated by an angel before he was born; a name so venerable, St. Paul says, *that every knee shall bend at the sound thereof; of those who are in Heaven, on earth, and in hell*, that is, the most holy name of JESUS. But what does the name of Jesus signify? It signifies a Saviour, or Redeemer. Why was the name of Jesus, or Saviour of Mankind, given to Christ in his circumcision, since the salvation of mankind was to be wrought upon the cross? For the strongest reasons imaginable: 1st, Because it was Christ Jesus that truly saved us and redeemed us from the slavery of sin, and the eternal punishments due to sin; 2d, Because, by submitting to circumcision, he contracted an obligation of dying for the redemption of mankind; for whoever was circumcised, became a debtor to the law, and put himself under an obligation of fulfilling the whole law, as St. Paul declares, in the 5th chapter of his Epistle to the Galatians. Now the law could not be fulfilled but by the oblation of the body and blood of Christ upon the cross—for which reason his last dying words were these, *now all is fulfilled*;—therefore Christ Jesus, by submitting to the law of circumcision, contracted an obligation of dying for the salvation of mankind. 3d, Christ Jesus not only contracted an obligation, in his circumcision, of saving mankind, but, likewise, put himself in the immediate and necessary dispositions of becoming a victim for them; for, in order to save mankind, it was necessary to make unto the Almighty God a full reparation for the injury he had received in the violation of his law; it was necessary his justice should be satisfied and appeased. But this no sinner, no creature, nothing less than a God,

do, because he alone could offer a satisfaction worthy of a God. This is the reason why Christ Jesus submits to the law of circumcision; for as that was the mark of sin in the Old Law, Christ Jesus, by undergoing that ceremony, took on him the appearance of sin, that he might in that character be able to offer himself a victim for all the sins of mankind, and endure the punishments they deserved. 4th, Christ Jesus in his circumcision began, in effect, to act the part of a Saviour, by shedding a part of his blood for the redemption of mankind. This followed from the very nature of the operation, wherein a part of his flesh was cut away, which was necessarily attended with an effusion of blood; so that the first drops that were spilt of his blood in the circumcision, were an earnest of his shedding the rest upon the cross. With what gratitude, then, should we call to mind that mystery, which was the commencement of our redemption. Another great advantage we derive from the circumcision of Christ, is, that this painful ceremony was abolished thereby, so as to subsist no longer in the New Law: for St. Paul says, in the 5th chapter of his Epistle to the Galatians, *If you be circumcised, Christ will avail you nothing: In Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision availeth any thing, but faith, which worketh by charity.* Our circumcision is baptism in Christ Jesus: for St. Paul says, in the 2d chapter to the Colossians, *You are circumcised with a circumcision not made with the hand, by taking away the bodily flesh, but with the circumcision of Christ, buried together to him in baptism.* Therefore what circumcision signified in the Old Law, baptism effects in the new, and that with its full degree of perfection, as by virtue of the sacrament, people of all nations and all conditions are regenerated in Christ, made children of God, and heirs to the kingdom of Heaven. 5th, It is, however, necessary to observe, that Christ Jesus, in his circumcision, abolished only the exterior performance of this ceremony; for the inward circumcision, or circumcision of the heart, remains still an indispensable obligation in the New Law: for our Saviour says, *If any one will be my disciple,*

simple, let him deny himself; and St. Paul, in his 3d chap. to the Philipp. *We are the circumcision, who serve God in spirit.*—Therefore there is a circumcision subsisting in the New Law, which consists in serving God in spirit. Even in the Old Law, the bare circumcision of the flesh availed nothing, without the spirit thereof, as appears from St. Paul, in his 2d chap. to the Rom. *He is not a Jew, who is so outwardly; nor is that circumcision, which is outwardly done in the flesh.--- But he is a Jew, who is so inwardly; and that is circumcision, which is of the heart, in the spirit, and not according to the letter.* This is the meaning, Christians, of these remarkable words in the 30th chapter of Deuteronomy: *The Lord will circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed, that thou mayest love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart.* What we should therefore propose to ourselves, from the consideration of this mystery, is, *to circumcise ourselves unto the Lord*, as the Prophet Jeremy said unto the Jews, *and cut away the uncircumcision of our hearts*; that is, to retrench every vicious affection, every irregular appetite of the mind, otherwise we can have no share in the circumcision of Christ, nor, consequently, in the fruits of his sufferings and redemption. 6th, But what does the circumcision of the heart consist in? First, in refusing ourselves every unlawful pleasure; and, secondly, in denying ourselves frequently the most lawful pleasures, to lower the passions, strengthen our virtue, and make ourselves conformable, in some measure, to Jesus Christ, our glorious head, and the pattern of all the elect. *Those who are of Christ*, St. Paul says to the Galatians, *have crucified their flesh, with its vices and lusts.* It is this crucifying of the flesh, or this circumcision of the heart, that we must endeavour at and compass in reality, if we entertain any desires of the kingdom of God. A resolution of this kind may be disagreeable to the corruption of our nature, which is always prone to sensual pleasures; but what should reconcile it to our thoughts, is, that it is absolutely necessary, and that it is nothing to what Christ Jesus suffered for us in his circumcision. In fine, when we see this infant God undergoing the

most painful operation, and at that period of life, when the delicacy of his constitution must have greatly added to every sensation of pain; and all this for our salvation, can we refuse, Christians, to submit to every severity of the law? No: Let us rather always bear about in our bodies, as St. Paul says to the Corinthians, the mortification of Christ, that the life of Christ may be made manifest in our bodies. If we do, we may justly expect that after denying ourselves a few insignificant pleasures upon earth, we shall be admitted one day into the everlasting joys of the kingdom of Heaven.
Amen.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

THE festival mentioned in the beginning of this day's Gospel, which Joseph, Mary and the child Jesus went up to celebrate at Jerusalem, when he was twelve years old, was the great festival of the Pasche or Passover. As this great festival had been instituted in commemoration of the deliverance of the Jews from their slavery in Egypt, and as their deliverance was held in the greatest veneration among the Jews, it was performed with the greatest solemnity imaginable. It lasted seven entire days, and was always celebrated with a prodigious concourse of people. No one that had any regard to the law, any sentiment of religion, or any gratitude for the blessings of Heaven, would be absent during this great and memorable solemnity.

Upon one of these occasions, the holy family of Nazareth, who were extremely remarkable for their godliness and punctual observance of the law, *went up to Jerusalem, according to the custom of the festival*, the Gospel says, *with the child Jesus who was then twelve years old.* After spending the term prescribed by the law, in the religious exercises of offering up sacrifices unto the Lord, and hearing the law read and expounded in the Temple, they returned towards their home,

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but the child Jesus remained in Jerusalem, and his parents knew it not. For imagining him in company of the group wherewith they travelled, one day's journey was made before they missed him. After searching in vain amongst their kindred and acquaintance, they return, sorrowful, to Jerusalem, where for three days they continue the search; and at length led by the finger of God to the Temple, there the astonished parents find him (Jof. lib. 7,) seated, surrounded by the Rabbies or Doctors of the Law, listening to and proposing unto them questions.

What an awful sight was this, Christians, to see a child discoursing at the age of twelve, upon the most sublime and important points of the law, in presence of the most learned men of the Synagogue? And what an opinion must the assembly have conceived of his riper years, from the immense knowledge and penetration which shined forth at that tender age in all his words? The Gospel says, *that all those that heard him were astonished at his wisdom and answers.*

You are to observe, Christians, that the wisdom and knowledge of Christ Jesus did not grow up with his years, nor receive any gradual increase from his advancing in age? No: This is the condition of created and imperfect beings, who never attain the perfection of their nature but by slow degrees and successive advances. With Christ Jesus it was quite otherwise: As he was the Son of God, and the plenitude of the divinity residing within him, according to the expression of St. Paul, from the very first moment of his incarnation, he was at all times possessed of all the wisdom of the divinity. But this wisdom he was pleased to conceal, and only manifested some slender sketches of it, from time to time, during his private life, until he should appear in his public character, and then display the wisdom of his godhead, by the lustre of his miracles and the sublimity and irreprehensibility of his doctrine. Therefore, when the Gospel says, *that as he increased in age, he likewise increased in wisdom*, we are to understand thereby that he was pleased to give more frequent and more remarkable proofs of the infinite wisdom he was possessed of from

the beginning. But the Gospel says *he increased in grace*—Here, O Christians! is the chief source of our instructions, the great model we should propose unto ourselves, in our deportment and conduct. Happy indeed would it have been, did the world allow us to discover an increase of grace with an increase of years among the little ones we behold in the streets of this city. Carrying about them in their form and endowments, the beautiful work of God, they scarcely know there is a God, but are conversant in the vices of our unhappy nature. Soon as they reach the use of speech, the thoughtless parent studies more to indulge the wandering fancies of their unhappy nature, than impress their tender hearts with the love of discipline, and a pious veneration for that Almighty Being for whom alone they were made. In proportion as they advance in years, do they *increase in virtue*? No. The child at twelve years of age, knows no law but his liberty, no God but his immoral parents, who by their negligence and evil example, make one universal wreck of themselves and their unhappy posterity. Beware, Christians; time rolls on without interruption: last year is past, the present is on the wing, the end of which no man can promise to himself. Where is the man that even purposes within himself to lead this year a more Christian life, than he did the year before? Where is he that during any one year lays aside any one evil practice?

Behold, Christians, in Mary and Joseph, a beautiful model for parents, who are too apt to look upon their children with the eyes of the flesh, that is, with the sentiments of nature, without any regard to religion or the order of Divine Providence. What they chiefly are anxious for, is, to behold their children esteemed or regarded in public, and placed in the prosperous conditions of the world. But what they should be mostly solicitous about, is to see them educated in the love and fear of God, and formed with such principles as may qualify and enable them to answer the views of providence in the different stations of life. Any accident that happens a beloved child, any misfortune that may befall him, is enough to throw the
parent

parent into the deepest affliction; but should this darling child be unacquainted with the most essential duties of religion, should he prove extremely careless and negligent in his duties to God, it does not give the parents the smallest concern. Why so? Because they always act from the sentiments of flesh and blood alone, without once consulting the principles of religion. Were they governed by the spirit of God, they certainly would take care their children should be frequently employed in the things that concern their Heavenly Father, the great and universal parent of mankind.

After the child Jesus had made his parents sensible of their error, he went home along with them, the Gospel says, *and was subject unto them*. Can any thing, Christians, be more astonishing, than to see the Maker of Heaven and Earth, and Lord of all things—the Ruler of Rulers, and King of Kings—subject himself to the power and government of Joseph and Mary, not for a few days, or a few months, but for many long years. What an instance of humility and obedience is this! There is nothing fits heavier on the mind of man, than subjection of any kind; but what should make the greatest subjection easy, is the example of Christ. He was master of all, and consequently had an undoubted right to command; yet he would obey, because it was the will and appointment of Heaven. From a principle of religion, therefore, let us submit to the subjection we lie under, in the different conditions of life. The lower ranks are subject to the higher, and the higher to superior conditions. Every station is in some measure subject to another; the servant to his master, the child to his parent, and the wife to her husband. Thus it is ordered by Almighty God, who requires a due respect and submission from our hands. *Obey the powers that are above you*, saith St. Paul, *and that because all power is derived from above*.

This is the principle the child Jesus was governed by, during his long subjection in Nazareth; during which period he could have appeared in public, wrought a great many miracles, and converted whole nations, nay the entire world; yet because that was
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not the will of his Heavenly Father, and that his hour was not as yet come, he remained contented in obscurity and retirement. Divines and Doctors of the Church infer from this subjection of Christ Jesus, that godliness and perfection do not consist in performing great and conspicuous actions, such as draw the eyes and attention of the world; for, it is very plain, that Christ Jesus was taken up with nothing very remarkable in his retirement, for near thirty years, at Nazareth, and his example must certainly be the rule of all those that aspire to higher degrees of virtue. The most minute actions relating to our duty, and performed with the spirit of religion, contribute more to our advancement in virtue, and are more meritorious in the sight of God, than actions of the greatest splendour. For these actions may easily proceed from vanity, ostentation, or a desire of being noticed and considered in the world; but when a person applies to the most minute observances of his duty, and studies to do them with the greatest perfection they can admit of, it is evident this person has nothing in view but God, and the fulfilling of his holy law. Yet, Christians, how many are there who mind every thing but the essential duties of their own state?—that mind their own obligations barely from a worldly principle, without ever reflecting on the divine hand that placed them in that situation of life, and requires at their hands the accomplishment of all the obligations attendant upon it?

What then have we to do, Christians? To convince ourselves, 1st, that our perfection consists in discharging punctually our duty in the station of life God has placed us in; 2d, in discharging our duty in every respective station with all the fidelity we are capable of, without going out of our sphere, or aiming at higher matters for the sake of human applause. By this means we shall copy after the example of Christ Jesus, who confined himself for thirty years to the lowest occupations in his retreat. By this means, likewise, our virtue will increase with our years, and procure us at length the rewards the Almighty God reserves for all his true and faithful servants, in his heavenly kingdom. *Amen.*

SECOND

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

IT is not to be doubted, Christians, but Christ Jesus sanctified in a high degree, and bestowed the most valuable blessings on the wedding at Cana in Gallilee, to which he was invited, and at which he condescended to assist, and even honour by so great a miracle, as turning a great quantity of water into wine. By sanctifying this wedding with his divine presence, he prepared the way, as the holy Fathers observe, for the great dignity matrimony is raised to in the New Law, or Christian dispensation. For St. Paul says, matrimony is a great sacrament in Christ and in his Church; from which words it plainly appears, that matrimony has acquired, from the appointment and institution of Christ, a greater excellency than it had before, and this excellency consists in its being raised in the New Law to the dignity of a Sacrament.

In the law of Nature, or before the time of Moses, it was only a civil contract, that is, a legal convention or agreement between man and woman. From the time of Moses to the coming of Christ, it was a religious ceremony with regard to the Jews; but since the coming of Christ, it is more than a civil contract, more than a religious ceremony,—an actual sacrament; that is, a sacred rite or performance, which has the virtue, from the institution of Christ, of conferring divine grace.

But what graces doth it confer? 1st, It confers an augmentation of habitual or sanctifying grace, or that grace which resides continually in the soul of every just man; 2d, It confers actual graces, or the particular aids which are necessary towards discharging the obligations of this state of life, and bearing patiently the hardships attendant upon it, such as the solitudes of the world—bringing forth, educating, and providing for children,—and the continual trials that result from continual subjection.

Matrimony is not only a Sacrament, but a great Sacrament, as St. Paul declares. And how great? *In Christ*

Christ and in his Church, he says; that is, Christians, 1st, Because matrimony was instituted to represent, and it naturally represents the spiritual alliance the Almighty God has been pleased to contract with mankind in general, in the person of Christ Jesus; 2d, Because matrimony was instituted to represent the spiritual alliance Christ Jesus has been pleased to contract with his Church, and all the faithful it is composed of, all over the world: For St. Paul says, *Christ hath loved his Church, and delivered himself for it*; 3d, Because it was instituted for the noblest ends, the multiplication and propagation of rational beings to serve the Almighty in spirit and truth.

It is from these reasons the same Apostle says, that *Marriage is holy, or a state of sanctity and godliness*. But how far is it looked upon in this light, even by the Christians of our days? As marriage is a state of sanctity and godliness according to the declaration of St. Paul, two things necessarily follow: the first that people should never engage in it, but from the views of religion: and the second, that after engaging they should behave according the strictest rules of religion. But instead of this, people before engaging in the married state, seldom or never consult the principles of religion; or live up to them after engaging: Whence it happens, that what is in itself, and the designs of Providence, a state of sanctity and godliness, is most commonly profaned by the greater part of mankind, so as to become a state of continual guilt,

The first thing religion prescribes with regard to matrimony, is, that people engage in the marriage state with a pure conscience, or with a conscience free from sin. For matrimony is a Sacrament of the New Law; and consequently should be treated with the respect due to sacred things. To do otherwise, is committing a most criminal and sacrilegious profanation of that sacrament, which St. Paul calls *a great sacrament in Christ and in his Church*. To prevent this sacrilegious profanation, the Church requires that those who are upon the point of engaging in the marriage state previously confess, in order to obtain that pureness of soul, which is requisite for the sacrament,
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and the state of sanctity it gives admittance to. But who is it ever thinks seriously of this great and indispensable obligation? Is not matrimony constantly looked upon at least as an indifferent ceremony by the greater part of the Christians of our days? How many are there that go, or would fain go to the altar to be married immediately after a party of pleasure, without the least preparation for, or reflection upon, the dignity of the sacrament, and the pious dispositions it requires? Even those who pay the greatest deference, and shew the greatest veneration, for every other sacrament, seem to make no account of matrimony. Nevertheless it is no less a sacrament,—no less instituted by the author of all sacraments, our blessed Lord and Redeemer Christ Jesus; no less intended for great and spiritual purposes; no less productive of great and spiritual blessings, than any other sacrament of the New Law. Why then is it, or should it be so constantly profaned, even by those who behave with respect in every other performance of religion?

How many are there, likewise, who receive this sacrament in a state of sin; engaging without previous and necessary consent from parents, or permission from the Church? As a proceeding of this kind is extremely sinful in the eyes of God, and a manifest sacrilegious profanation of the sacrament, what must the consequence be? Undoubtedly, Christians, perpetual hardships, disappointments and troubles. For how is it possible for those to expect a blessing, who enter into the married state, which is a state of sanctity and holiness, by a most flagitious crime? could we but pry into the secret judgments of the Lord, we certainly should find that receiving the sacrament of matrimony with a guilty conscience, in violation of the laws of God, and the laws of his Church, is the source of all the calamities that attend the many unfortunate marriages we daily see in the world.

The second thing religion prescribes, with regard to matrimony, is, that people be guided by the principles of religion in the choice they make. *Let the person that marries, St. Paul says, marry in the Lord.* From these words of St. Paul it follows, that, what those who
intend

intend to engage in the married state, should first propose unto themselves, is, to make such a choice as may be most capable of leading them unto the Lord, by their good and virtuous qualifications. Did this great principle take place in most engagements, virtue, modesty, prudence and good humour would always prevail over, and be constantly preferred before the inferior and insignificant advantages of beauty or fortune. But is this the principle of those who mean to engage in the wedded state? No: Fortune alone is generally consulted on occasions of this kind. Provided the parties be rich and opulent in the world, all is well; although they should be destitute of every social and Christian virtue. Young persons of both sexes are daily disposed of to the highest bidder, in the very midst of Christianity; as slaves are transferred to those that are willing to purchase them at the highest value. Is it then surprizing, Christians, that the greater part of marriage engagements should prove, as they generally do, not a state of happiness, as Providence intended them, but a state of perpetual misery, strife, and disunion.

The third thing religion prescribes, with regard to matrimony, is a punctual observance of the essential duties of that state of life, and a constant forbearance with the hardships and difficulties inseparable from it. *I would advise those that are single or unmarried, to remain so*, St. Paul says; *however if thou hast taken a wife, thou hast not sinned; nor has a virgin sinned if she has taken a husband; but both of them will experience the tribulation of the flesh*: That is, both of them will undergo a great deal of trouble and hardship in the the world. And truly, Christians, what hardships must necessarily result from a continual subjection to a husband; the bearing of children; rearing, educating and providing for a large and numerous offspring? But these very hardships make up the wedded duties of that state. It is by bearing with these hardships, and going through them with a spirit of religion, that people are sanctified; and not only sanctified, but saved in the wedded state. For St. Paul says, 1 Tim. 2, 15, *The woman shall be saved through child-bearing*, or by the care of her children.

Therefore

Therefore, as there are very few, comparatively speaking, disposed to follow the advice of the Apostle, by remaining single or unmarried; what all young persons should propose unto themselves, is, to fulfil punctually, after engaging, all the obligations of the wedded state—fidelity, obedience, condescension, a constant application to the care of their family, and a proper, that is, a Christian education of their offspring. By this means they certainly will partake of all the great blessings the sacrament of matrimony is productive of—joy, peace, and tranquillity in this life, and eternal happiness in the next. *Amen.*

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

THE first thing we are to take notice of, with regard to this day's Gospel, is the miraculous cure our Saviour wrought, upon a man afflicted with a leprosy, at his coming down from a mountain, where he frequently went to instruct the multitudes of people that followed him. As soon as the sick man heard of our Saviour's coming down from the mountain, he immediately pierced the crowd that surrounded him, and threw himself prostrate before him, saying, *Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.* It was not only the desire of recovering his health that induced this sick man to apply to Christ Jesus; he was likewise urged thereto by other powerful motives,—a strong inclination of being restored to the society and conversation of his countrymen and fellow citizens. For you must know, Christians, that as the leprosy was a very hideous and infectious disorder, it was held in great abomination among the Jews; insomuch that it was not lawful for any one to touch those that were troubled with that disorder: And such as did touch them, contracted a legal uncleanness, by which they were disqualified from entering into the Temple, or assisting at any exercise of religion, until they were purified in the manner prescribed by the law. It is not then surprizing that the sick man, who was not only destitute of health, but likewise

likewise cut off, in some measure, from all public society, made his application unto Christ Jesus in the most earnest, humble, and confident terms: *Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean?* Nor was he any way deceived in his expectation; for, the moment he made his request, our Saviour stretched forth his hand, and touched him, saying, *I will: be thou made clean; and immediately he was healed from his leprosy.*

This leprosy, Christians, the holy Fathers and Doctors of the Church say, is an image or emblem of the inward disorder sin creates in the soul of a Christian: For 1st, it disfigures the soul, by depriving it of the robe of innocence, and the bright ornament of grace. In this condition it must certainly be a most hideous object—an object of hatred and aversion in the eyes of God.—2d, It weakens the soul, and deprives it of all its spiritual strength and vigour; inasmuch, that a soul in the state of mortal sin is entirely incapable of doing any good work, any thing that is meritorious of the grace of God, and eternal life. Those who are in the state of sin may, indeed, pray, and sigh, and weep, and thereby obtain the graces of conversion; but, while they continue in this sinful state, they can perform no actions of life, as they are dead in reality in the eyes of God, and deprived of his holy grace, which enlivens our actions, and gives them all their merit. Can any thing, Christians, be more deplorable, than a situation of this kind? Yet how many are there labouring under this deplorable situation, without being sensible thereof, or shewing the least concern for it? Ah! Christians, could we but rightly conceive what it is to be displeasing to God, and the object of his hatred and aversion, we would certainly use our utmost endeavours to withdraw ourselves from a situation of that kind in his sight. We would apply to Christ Jesus, who is the divine physician of souls, with as much earnestness and solicitude as the Leper in this day's Gospel, beseeching him to cleanse us from the stains of sin; and the hideous marks or impressions it leaves in the soul, and likewise from the spiritual feebleness and languor we contract thereby. If we did apply sincerely to Christ Jesus for this purpose, it
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is not to be questioned, Christians, but he would hear us, and heal our souls with the same bounty and goodness with which he healed the Leper, mentioned in this day's Gospel. But the misfortune is, that those who languish in a state of mortal sin have no thought of being cured. Their situation, dreadful as it is, is agreeable to their passions, and the depravation of their corrupted nature; wherefore they chuse to remain in the shades of death, rather than have recourse to Christ Jesus, the author of life, and eternal life. What then will the consequence be? They must perish, and perish eternally, through their own fault and perverseness.

After our Saviour had cured, by a miracle, the Leper, he said unto him; *Take heed thou speakest not of it to any one.* What an instance of humility is this! Although the greatest praise and the greatest glory were justly due to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, on account of the very miracles he was daily working, in favour of the distressed, yet he would decline publicly all honour and glory; in order to shew and convince us, we should never seek for human applause in our actions, but offer them solely to Almighty God. And indeed, Christians, can any thing be more reasonable? For what is it in man can be found worthy of praise or applause? Have we any thing of ourselves but weaknesses, imperfections, and sin? If any good you do is it not the gift of God? *What have you, says the Apostle St. Paul, that you have not received? And if you have received it, why do you boast, as if you received it not?* Although we should fulfil our duty in every respect (which I am very sure is far from being the case, with the greater part of mankind) even then Christ Jesus desires us *to look upon ourselves as useless and unprofitable servants.*

When our Saviour had entered the little town of Capharnaum, a centurion, that is a Roman officer, who had a hundred men under his command, came and requested him, saying, *Lord, my servant lyeth at home sick of the palsy and is much tormented;* to which our Saviour answered, *I will come and heal him.* But the centurion replied. *Lord I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter*

enter under my roof, command with a word only, and my servant will be healed. For I am a man also in power, having soldiers under my command, and I say to this man, go, and he goeth; and to another come and he cometh; and to my servant do this, and he doth it. What the centurion meant by these words was, to shew the high opinion he had of the power of Jesus. For they imply thus much:—If I, who am no more than a mortal man, have authority enough to do whatever I think proper, by the means of those I have under my command, how much more must you, who are vested with the power of the Almighty God, be able to do what you desire, and restore my servant to health by one single word? This was indeed, Christians, a most lively faith; for which reason our Saviour was pleased to take notice of it publicly, and declare he had not met with so great faith in all Israel. But the public praise and commendation he was pleased to give the lively faith of the centurion was, at the same time, a severe rebuke to the multitude of the Jews that were about him; who notwithstanding his frequent instructions and the many miracles they were daily witnesses to, had so little faith in him. This appears plainly from the following words of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: *Many shall come from the East and the West, and feast with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of Heaven; but the children of the kingdom shall be cast forth into exterior darkness, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.* That is, Christians, the greatest strangers from the remotest parts of the earth, shall come and be converted, and after being converted, attain to eternal happiness, which is here represented under the image of a splendid and delicious banquet: whilst the children of the kingdom, that is the Jews, who had the law and the prophets, and amongst whom the Messiah was born and appeared, shall be cast forth into exterior darkness, and excluded for ever from the society of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, in the kingdom of Heaven.

Can any thing be more dreadful than this declaration of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ? Let us consider how far it may concern each of ourselves in particular.

ticular. We are, undoubtedly, the children of the kingdom, in as much as we have been *substituted to the Jews*, as St. Paul declares, born in, and publicly profess, the faith of Christ; but is it not very much to be feared, that from our own neglect in the service of God, we shall be cast into exterior darkness, whilst others shall be converted to the faith we profess, and, by their fidelity to the law, step into the places that were designed for us in the Kingdom of Heaven? We profess the faith of Christ Jesus, it is true; but do we live conformable to the maxims of this divine faith? If we do not, instead of contributing to our eternal happiness, it will only serve to bring us under a severe condemnation. For our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ declares, that the unbelievers will be treated with less severity, at the last day, than those that heard of the name of Christ, and rejected it; or that received the law, and did not comply therewith. What then are we to do, Christians?---To behave as the children of the kingdom; not only in believing Christ Jesus, but to live according to our belief. If we do, we shall never be cast into exterior darkness, but rather admitted to feast for ever, and ever with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; that is with all the saints and elect of God, in the kingdom of Heaven.---*Amen.*

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

THE storm mentioned in this day's Gospel, in which the Disciples of our Lord were in the most imminent danger of perishing, inasmuch as the boat they were in was covered all over with waves; is a lively image, the holy Fathers say, of the many dangers and storms, even the very just, stand exposed to, on the boisterous ocean of this world. Though they sail under the direction of Divine Providence, and in some measure in the company of Christ Jesus; yet they frequently meet with such violent conflicts, as are sufficient to overwhelm their
virtue

virtue, and drive them headlong to everlasting ruin. In a situation of this kind, they are necessarily filled, as well as the Disciples of our Lord, with the liveliest apprehensions, and forced to cry out unto Christ Jesus, *save us, O Lord; for we are upon the point of perishing.* With regard to his Disciples, Jesus Christ was indeed graciously pleased to allay their fears, by dispelling the storm, and calming suddenly the raging waves: for the Gospel says, *that rising up, he commanded the winds, and the sea, and a great calm ensued.* But this he is not always pleased to do, in reference to his greatest favourites, the just and good. On the contrary, he frequently leaves them, even during their whole life, exposed to many violent storms, temptations and sufferings; and although in this dreadful situation, they may cry out unto him for relief; yet he seems to be asleep, as it is mentioned in this day's Gospel; that is, deaf to their cries, and insensible of the manifold dangers that surrounded them. What can be the cause, Christians, of this extraordinary conduct, on the part of Almighty God? Or how is it consistent with his infinite goodness, to abandon, as it were, his most faithful servants in their highest distress? Is he either incapable of relieving them, or unwilling to grant them relief? Does he not see the extremities they are frequently drawn to? And if he does, why doth he not rise up to command the winds and the seas? Why doth he not dispel the storm and restore peace and tranquillity to their disconsolate minds? This is, Christians, the deep and impenetrable mystery of Divine providence; but a mystery which must undoubtedly be grounded on the most solid and substantial reasons, on the part of God. For, as he is governed by infinite wisdom, and justice, and goodness, in all his actions; it is plain he must act from the same principles, in leaving the just amidst the sufferings and oppressions of the world. This alone, Christians, were enough, I think, to reconcile the inscrutable ways of providence unto our thoughts: several reasons however may be assigned, why the Almighty treats his friends with the greatest severity in appearance; while the wicked and unjust are suffered

ferred to prosper mostly in all their designs, and undertakings.

The first reason why the Almighty God leaves the just exposed to the most violent storms of life, is to try their virtue and fidelity. It is an easy matter to be faithful to God, while every thing succeeds according to our wishes and desires. The most common and imperfect virtue will support itself in easy circumstances of this kind. But to adhere faithfully to the Lord *when he stretches forth his hand and touches* (Job. 1.)—when the storm begins to rise—when violent temptations assail us on every side, requires, Christians, the most solid virtue, the most firm and unshaken constancy. Before we are tried, we do not know either our weakness or our virtue. In the absence of danger, we may think ourselves firm and immoveable as the rock; but in the time of trial, we often feel and experience the reverse. *They come unto me for a time*, saith our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, *but then they go away from me in the time of temptation.* It is therefore, Christians, in the time of temptation alone, that we can be satisfied of our having any share of virtue, any fear or any love for God. And this is the reason why the Royal Prophet used frequently address the almighty God, in the following manner; *Try me, Lord, and sound my heart. Look unto the most secret affections and dispositions of my soul.* Then shall my fidelity appear in its brightest colours: Then shall it be made known to the whole world, how deeply thy holy law is imprinted on my heart. Now, Christians, what advantage must it not be, for any one to know, that he is united to God, and faithful in his duty, though he be left alone, to struggle and contend with the storms that agitate this life?

The second reason which induces the Almighty God to leave his friends, as he did his own disciples, in the greatest apprehensions of perishing, is, to purify their virtue, and divest them of all earthly views and expectations. If wealth and prosperity were the necessary consequences of virtue, we should all love God, and serve him on this very account; with a view to the riches and happiness of this world. But the Almighty

Almighty God will have us love him purely for his own sake. Wherefore he takes especial care to lead the just through such scenes of disappointments, as must imbitter every situation of life ; and leave them no taste, no relish, no love or affection but for God alone. This is what the Prophet sets forth in one of his psalms, where, after tenderly, but respectfully complaining of his continual misfortunes to the Lord, he concludes in the following manner, at that very time, *My soul refused all sort of consolation. I only thought of thee, O Lord, and was comforted.*

The third reason why the almighty leaves the just and the good, in a continual state of trial and danger, is, to give them an opportunity of encreasing their merits, and consequently their rewards in Heaven. For without dangers and combats, there can be no victory—without trial, no combat—without victory, no crown or reward. *No man is crowned*, St. Paul says, *but he that fought properly.* Is it not then, Christians, a real blessing to the righteous and just, to be left in such situations, as must put it continually in their way, to make new and large additions, to the glory that is reserved for them, in the kingdom of Heaven ; where, as our Saviour says, there are many mansions, that is, different degrees of happiness, all proportioned to the various degrees of our merits upon earth ? Or how can the just complain of that disposition of divine Providence, which for every moment of tribulation, bestows upon them, as the Apostle says, *an eternal weight of Glory in Heaven ?*

The fourth reason is, to compel and force the just in some measure, to persevere to the end in justice and righteousness. Were they to prosper continually in this world, and meet with little or no disappointments, they soon would follow the wicked ways of the world, and consequently abandon the Almighty God. But *as no one is to be saved*, according to the express declaration of Christ Jesus, *but he that persevereth unto the end*, the Almighty God, in his infinite mercy, removes those dangers and temptations, at a distance, which would infallibly seduce the just, and lead them astray, from the ways of righteousness. He conducts them,

as it were, by the hand, through the narrow and rugged paths of salvation; whilst he suffers sinners to walk and run on chearfully, in the broad and enchanting way, that leads directly to eternal perdition.

It cannot be denied, Christians, but a great many just men have flourished and prospered in the world; witness, the patriarchs of the old law, and many holy Kings and Princes in the new. But then, these prosperous, just men, were continually apprehensive of the dangers, they were exposed to, from this very prosperity; and in consequence of their apprehensions, took the most effectual steps to secure their virtue, by practising, in the highest affluence, the severest laws of self-denial and abnegation; and entertaining in the greatest elevation of power, the humblest sentiments of a Christian mind. But as this would require a most extraordinary assistance and protection from Heaven, the Almighty chuses, in general, to refuse the worldly advantages of wealth and prosperity, which are attended with the greatest dangers to salvation. The examples were few, and only calculated to shew the virtue and efficacy of the grace of God.

What then are we to infer from the Gospel of this day? Two things; the first, Christians, that we are to consider this world as a scene of continual war, in which we are incessantly to engage and struggle with many powerful enemies, visible and invisible; the evil spirit, the world, and the flesh; or, to speak in the language of this day's Gospel, the world, as a boisterous ocean, on which we must meet with many furious and violent storms, that threaten nothing less than eternal ruin and destruction. 2d, That we are to make it a rule to ourselves, to cry out unto the Lord for assistance in the time of distress, as the disciples of Jesus Christ did, when the waves were rushing in upon them, and upon the point of overwhelming the little vessel they were in. Although he may seem to be asleep for a time, or insensible to our cries, he certainly will relieve us in the end; either by dispelling entirely the storm, or enabling us, by his ho-

ly Grace, to overcome all the difficulties we may labour under. Thus it was he behaved toward St. Paul; for he assures us, that although, he thrice had prayed the Almighty God, to relieve him from a violent temptation, or, from the angel of Satan, as he calls it, that was continually stinging and tormenting him, still the Almighty refused to deliver him from the tempting spirit, but assured him, at the same time, *that his Grace was sufficient unto him*; or, in other words, that with the assistance of his Grace, he could not only resist, but even conquer the evil spirit. Even this must be a great consolation to a just man, who means to persevere in justice, inasmuch as it is plain from thence, he can by grace, not only withstand the various storms of this life, but even reach at length the delightful harbour of eternal rest and tranquillity.—*Amen.*

SEPTUAGESIMA.

Ite et vos in vineam meam.

WHO is this master of a family, who went out early in the morning, to hire workmen into his vineyard?—Jesus Christ himself, who came down from Heaven to point out to us the paths of eternal happiness. The vineyard is the faith of Christ; the workmen, all those that adhere to the faith of Christ; the labour, the observance of the law of God, and the sanctification of the souls; the hire, eternal happiness. Heaven, Christians, is a reward: and the reward of the faithful workmen alone; as appears from these words of Christ Jesus, *your reward shall be great in Heaven.* We have been all called to this vineyard of the Lord; but what have we done in it? Let each of us, Christians, turn his thoughts inwardly upon himself, and examine how he has laboured in this vineyard of the Lord, since he arrived at the years of discretion? Have we fulfilled constantly the laws of our God,—the commandments of his Church?

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Have we constantly applied to the essential duties of every Christian in general, and the essential occupation of each one's station in particular? Christians, have we not been, rather, of the number of those slothful and indolent workmen, who stood idle in the market-place all the day long? If we do ourselves justice, we certainly must acknowledge, that we have not spent one single day of our whole lives in the vineyard of the Lord: that is, in serving God, and improving our souls in virtue and Godliness. This is undoubtedly the case with a great many of the Christians of our days: For let me ask yourselves, can any thing be more common, than to see persons of both sexes, spending whole days, very often their whole life, in idle amusements, unprofitable visits, insignificant conversations, dangerous, if not sinful recreations? Is this labouring in the vineyard of the Lord? Is this leading a Christian life? Is this living conformably to the maxims of Christ Jesus? or, conformably to the very dictates of natural reason? undoubtedly not: for the Maxims of Christ inform us, *we are to do good while we have the time to do it*; and that nothing can be more precious than the time we throw away, inasmuch, as every moment thereof, when well employed, is capable of procuring for us, an eternal weight of glory in Heaven. Reason tells us, that the Almighty God must have had some view or design in introducing us into this world, which certainly must be quite inconsistent with the useless and unprofitable life, a great many are seen to lead. And what is still more astonishing, is, that persons of this character, seem to make no account of the idleness they live in, and imagine they are no ways answerable for it, in the eyes of God. But how can they forget, that idleness was always held amongst the capital crimes? Besides, does not Christ Jesus assure us in the Gospel, *there is not an idle word we drop, but we are accountable for, in the sight of God*? And if so, how much more must we be accountable, at the tribunal of Christ, for a long and empty course, of a long and empty life?

It is not to be questioned, Christians, but that idleness in general is extremely criminal in the sight of God. But when and how far is it criminal? It is always a crime when it makes us omit any one essential obligation of religion, such as prayer, and the worship of the Lord, in the sacrifice of the New Law; that is, should we neglect thro' idleness to pray, as often as we are obliged, or assist at the sacrifice, or inform our minds of the necessary duties of religion. 2. It is always a crime when it makes us omit any one essential obligation, relating to our different states in life. Thus a parent is certainly guilty of a crime, as often as he neglects taking proper care of his children and family; and a master or mistress of their servants and others, who may be committed to their care. 3. Idleness is always criminal, when it is so great as to prevent our applying to some serious occupation, that may be necessary for the preservation of virtue. For be pleased to observe, that as the mind is an active principle, it can never be at rest; it must be employed in good or in evil. If it be not employed in good, it will certainly decline to evil. Therefore to prevent its declining to evil, 'tis necessary it be taken up with some good and serious occupation; *for idleness, the Holy Ghost declares, is attended with a long and numerous train of evils and mischief.* Let us therefore, Christians, attend the call of Christ. Let us enter his vineyard and work strenuously therein; every man according to his capacity and situation in life; that is, let us apply strenuously to the great and important business of our salvation, by giving all our application to the duties of religion, in the first place, and next, the duties attendant upon our respective stations in the world. O! Christians, have we no sins, or offences to atone for? no graces or blessings to obtain? no dangers or difficulties to foresee or guard against? no duties to learn? none to fulfil? Let us, therefore, employ that precious time we incessantly mispend, in doing penance for our sins; in suing for and obtaining the blessing of Heaven; in considering of, and taking just measures to avoid the manifold dangers of life; let us do this, and certainly we will

will have very little time to spare. *What does it avail a Man, saith our Lord and Saviour Christ Jesus, to gain the whole world, if he should lose his soul? All the rest will fade away,* the Prophet says, *like a blade of grass before the sun*; but nothing can make one amends for the loss of his Soul. Nevertheless, Christians, have we not been often in danger of losing our immortal souls, and beholding ourselves condemned to everlasting punishments? Let us then no longer run such dreadful risks, but betake ourselves timely to the vineyard of the Lord; that is, bend all our thoughts and applications towards the salvation of our souls. By this means we can make amends for all our past negligences and idleness. For we are assured in this day's Gospel, that, those that came at the last hour, received as much as those that worked from the first hour, and bore all the burden of the heat and day. For the Almighty God does not compute our services, from the length of time, but from our good will, and the fervency of the heart; as appears from these words of Holy Writ: *God loveth him that giveth cheerfully.* If therefore we repent sincerely of our past sloth and negligence, and spend the last hour, that is, the remainder of our lives, in the service of God, practising virtue and Godliness, we certainly will receive as great a reward as those that laboured in the vineyard of the Lord from the very first hour. Nay, it may happen, that we surpass them by many degrees: for we read in this day's Gospel, *the last shall be first and the first last*; which means, that those who betake themselves late to the service of the Lord, very often, by a great fervency of spirit, a pure and exalted love of God, and a constant application to do all the good that comes in their way, rise to a higher degree of virtue and Godliness; acquire greater merits; and, of consequence, become entitled to a greater share of Glory and happiness in the kingdom of God, than those who served him from the beginning, but with negligence, tepidity and slothfulness of spirit.

Should not this consideration alone, Christians, spur us on to the practice of virtue and piety? But

what should still urge us more powerfully thereto, is the following words of Christ Jesus, *many are called but few are chosen*. Deluded by a fatal indolence, we are apt to flatter ourselves safe; and rest as though secured, with regard to salvation. Born in the bosom of the Catholic Church, professing the faith of Christ, enjoying daily the benefits of religion, prayer, the sacraments and the sacrifices; yet Christ Jesus assures us, *that though many are called, yet but few are chosen*. Are we, Christians, of the number of those that are *called* and *chosen*? Or of those that are only called and not chosen? This is, Christians, a mystery impenetrable to all mankind. One thing however, is certain, that if we work strenuously in the vineyard of the Lord; that is, fulfill faithfully the law of God; if we avoid evil and do good, we certainly will receive the reward of all true and faithful servants---the grace of God in this life, and eternal happiness in the next. *Amen.*

SEXAGESIMA.

IT was the custom of the learned of old, in the Eastern parts of the world, to speak by parables; that is, by figures and comparisons. The Prophets, and even Christ Jesus himself was pleased to make use of the same manner of conveying his thoughts and delivering his instructions to the people, and although the figures under which the moral instructions were couched, were plain and intelligible of themselves, yet as they were addressed to a very ignorant croud, they frequently stood in need of explanation. And this is the reason, Christians, why the disciples of our Lord intreat him in the Gospel of this day, to expound the parable of the sower, or husbandman, that went out to sow his seed. To his disciples he granted the explanation they sought for; because, as he says himself, *it was given unto them to know the Mysteries of the kingdom of God*; but at the same time, refused explaining

explaining the parable to the croud, *that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand.*

This is indeed a most dreadful declaration; inasmuch as it plainly imports, that the words of life, Christ Jesus was publishing aloud, were to make no impression on the minds of the greater part of his hearers; so that what was to be to others a source of life, was to be unto them a source of eternal perdition. But what was the cause, Christians, of this extraordinary proceeding on the side of Christ Jesus? Was it owing to a want of charity or benevolence towards the croud? undoubtedly it was not, as he was daily informing them of the ways, and dispensing amongst them the words of eternal life. What then was it owing to? To the perverseness of his hearers, who had already abused many of his instructions, and would likewise abuse the explanation of the parable mentioned in the Gospel of this day. Christ Jesus was willing to give them sufficient, nay, abundant light, to distinguish the ways of Heaven, and attain to eternal happiness; but would not continually be throwing pearls before swine, as he styles it himself; or in other words continually lavishing the most valuable graces, on persons who shewed themselves unworthy of them, in the highest degree.

These valuable graces he reserved for his own immediate Disciples, who, he knew, would make the proper use of them; and one of these Graces, was the explanation of the parable in question: wherefore he let his Disciples know, that the seed which the sower or husbandman went out to sow, was the word of God; and consequently the sower or husbandman the son of God, who by himself, or his Apostles, dispersed the words of life, all over the world; the ground in which the seed was sown, are the persons that hear the divine word; that a great part of the seed is lost, either by falling on the way side, where it is trodden upon, and picked up by the birds of the air; or on stony ground, where it has neither moisture enough to nurture it, nor earth enough to take root; or amidst thorns, where it is choaked up, and

hindered from coming to maturity: that is, as our blessed Saviour has explained it, that the heavenly seed of the divine word is often lost in the hearts of those that hear it; either by the suggestions of the evil spirit that banish the instructions from their minds, and root them from their hearts; or the sterility and corruption of their own nature, which doth not nourish the divine word; but rather let it wither and decay; or the cares and riches and pleasures of this world, which stifle the divine word within them, and hinder it from shooting into fruit.

And is not this visibly the case with a great many of ourselves? How often, Christians, has the heavenly seed of the divine word been sown in our hearts? How many instructions have we received from our very infancy, upon the duties and obligations of religion? The love of God, the fear of the Lord, and the observance of his holy law? A thousand times the saving truths of salvation have been laid before us, in the clearest and strongest light. A thousand times have we been told of the necessity of serving God; the rewards he has promised to all those that love and serve him; and the eternal torments he has decreed against all the guilty transgressors of his law. But what fruit has this divine seed produced in our hearts? Did it yield a hundred fold, like that part of the seed which fell upon rich and fruitful ground? Or did it not rather wither immediately and decay, through our own neglect and ungodliness? During these instructions, we propose within ourselves, to be ever more faithful to God and our duty; but the instruction is no sooner ended than we return to our former ways. Let us, therefore, humble ourselves in the presence of Almighty God, and acknowledge with confusion, sorrow, and compunction, the ill use we have made of the manifold instructions we have received, during the whole course of our lives, with regard to salvation. For these instructions, Christians, are so many graces which the Almighty has graciously granted us, in preference to thousands of others, who certainly would have turned them to the greatest advantage for their souls; and consequently graces we must answer for at
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the tribunal of God. What answers, Christians, will we be able to make unto the Almighty God, when he shall bring us to an account for the many instructions we have received, in point of religion, virtue and devotion, during the whole course of our lives? Shall we not then meet with the same reproaches which Christ Jesus made formerly to the Jews; who took little notice of the words of life he had so often delivered unto them, saying, *Woe be unto you, inhabitants of Corozain! If the same signs which have been wrought amongst you, had been performed in Tyre, and in Sidon, the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon had long since wrought penance in sackcloth and ashes.*

What then have we to do, Christians? 1st, We are to look upon the word as the most powerful means of conversion and sanctification, as a heavenly seed, which the Almighty God sows in our hearts, to make them bring forth the most precious and abundant fruits of justice and godliness. In fact is it not by the word of God, that the whole world has been brought over to the Christian faith? Is it not by the word of God that thousands of sinners are daily converted and reclaimed? Is it not by the word of God the ignorant are instructed, the learned improved, the lukewarm animated and enlivened, the feeble strengthened, and the just incited to higher degrees of perfection and godliness? Banish the word of God from Christian society, and what a state of error, ignorance, and depravity, must they not fall into? The word of God may, therefore, be deemed, as it in reality is, the very life and soul of religion. 2d, We are to receive the word of God *with a good heart*, as it is set forth in the Gospel of this day; that is willingly, chearfully, and with a strong and sincere resolution of practising the instructions we receive. Otherwise we certainly abate one of the greatest gifts of God, which will render us accountable to his justice, and draw upon us his severest punishments. *Take heed how you hear the word, faith our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, even that which he thinketh he hath, shall be taken away from him; that is, whosoever maketh a proper use of the word*

he heard, to him shall be given new graces; and whoever hath not made the proper use of the word he received, shall be deprived of the advantages he already has, and the graces he was to receive in consequence of the divine word. Is not this, Christians, a most dreadful declaration? To lose and be deprived of the graces of God we already had, and of the further graces and assistances that were intended for us! and all this on account of abusing or not making the proper use of the divine word! Surely no misfortune can be equal to that, by which one is deprived of the grace of God, and abandoned to his own natural weakness and corruption. 3d, We should make it a rule unto ourselves to read, every day of our lives, something of the divine word, in the books of piety, that are, or should be in the hands of the faithful. For the word is the food and nourishment of the soul. It is the light of the mind, strength of the heart, feeds and nourishes the soul in virtue and godliness. Nothing could be more worthy the zeal and attention of a Christian parent, than to read, or make one of their children read every night, in presence of their whole family, out of the lives of the saints, or some other pious book, for about a quarter of an hour. Reading in public would make the improvement general. The parents, the children, the domestics would benefit alike thereby. Incited by the examples of others, they would not only receive the word with joy, but likewise make it yield a hundred fold; or in other words bring forth such plentiful fruits of justice, as must entitle them to the greatest rewards in the kingdom of Heaven. *Amen.*

QUINQUAGESIMA.

AS the Jews expected that the Messiah promised unto Israel would come with great majesty and splendour, and by his temporal grandeur restore the kingdom of Israel to its ancient glory and elevation,
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it was necessary to undeceive them by degrees, and let them know his kingdom was not of this world, and that all the glory and magnificence that should attend his reign, as was foretold by the prophets, concerned only the spiritual empire he was to establish upon earth, and the immortal glory he was to purchase by his sufferings and death in the kingdom of Heaven: for the Apostle St. Paul says, *It was necessary Christ Jesus should suffer, and by that means enter into the glory of God.* It was necessary to let them know that he should be a *hidden God*, as the Prophet Isaiah foretold; that is, that he should appear in a state of obscurity, humiliation, abjection, persecution and oppression. It was for this purpose that our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ took frequent opportunities of entertaining his Disciples with his future humiliations and sufferings. For we read in the Gospel of this day, that taking his Disciples apart, he spoke to them in the following manner; Behold we are now going up to Jerusalem, where all things shall be accomplished, that have been written by the Prophets, of the Son of Man. *He shall be delivered up to the Gentiles. He shall be mocked, scourged and spit upon; and after being scourged they shall put him to death. And the third day he shall rise again.* But his Disciples, the Gospel says, understood not the words of Christ, nor did they conceive the meaning of what he said. As their prejudices were very strong in favour of his temporal grandeur and prosperity, they could not imagine he would ever appear in the greatest obscurity and humiliation; wherefore they concluded within themselves that there was something mysterious in the words of Christ, which they could not, at least would not, comprehend.

Is not this, Christians, a genuine image and lively expression of what passes daily amongst ourselves? Should the ministers of Christ set forth and enforce with all the zeal they are masters of, the necessity of practising the great virtues Christ Jesus was pleased to consecrate in his person, and make the very foundation of religion,—humility, self-denial, resignation amidst afflictions and sufferings; should I say the ministers of Christ set forth and enforce unto the faithful

ful these great and indispensable virtues, they understand not these things, nor can they conceive the meaning thereof. A man in some power and elevation cannot conceive what it is to humble himself continually under the powerful hand of God, and deem himself as nothing in the eyes of the Lord.

A man in affluence or opulence cannot conceive what it is to deny himself the pleasures and gratifications that surround him on every side, and which he has it every moment in his power to procure. A man in adversity cannot conceive that afflictions are the greatest blessings that Heaven can bestow, as they are the most effectual means of weaning us from our sinful ways, of satisfying and atoning for our past sins and transgressions, and the properest occasion of testifying unto God, our Lord and our Maker, the submission due to his supreme power and will.

Nothing, however, can be more certain than that these virtues are the most essential points of religion; that they are prescribed by the law, and have been made sacred in the person of Christ Jesus. What, therefore, every Christian should do, in the first place, is to conceive the meaning of these important words of Christ Jesus, *Learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart. If any one will be my Disciple let him deny himself. And again, not one can be my Disciple that does not take up his cross and follow me.* What I say every Christian should do, in the first place is, to conceive the meaning of these important words of Christ; and next, to convince himself in his own breast, of the indispensable obligation he lies under of practising these virtues, in order to attain eternal happiness. For as Christ Jesus is the model and pattern of all virtues, it is plain no man can be saved that does not tread in his steps. And this is the reason why St. Paul says, that *whom God hath predestinated to eternal happiness, he hath likewise decreed to make them conformable unto the image of his only son.* Wherefore, Christians, as the life of Christ Jesus was one continued scene of humiliation, self-denial and suffering, we must resolve upon making our own lives, an expression of his, by humility, abnegation and resignation under the severest pressures

pressures and calamities of this world. Otherwise we can have no hope of sharing in the rewards he has promised unto those who shall live up to his maxims, and follow his examples. For St. Paul says, no man is glorified with Christ Jesus, that has not partaken of the sufferings of Christ Jesus.

After Christ Jesus had informed his Disciples of his approaching humiliations and sufferings, he set out with them upon his journey to Jerusalem; and it happened as they were drawing near unto Jericho, they met a blind man begging near the way-side, who, the moment he heard from the croud it was Jesus of Nazareth that was passing by, cried out and said, *Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.* These words he repeated over and over with a loud voice, and eagerness of desire, insomuch that he at length became troublesome to the croud, who thought it proper to check his importunities, and if possible reduce him to silence. But the more he was checked the more he cried out aloud, *Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.* So great was his confidence in Christ Jesus, and so ardent his desire of recovering his sight. Nor was he any ways deceived in his expectations; for the moment Christ Jesus heard him, he ordered him to be brought before him, and said, *What wilt thou have me do for thee?* To which the blind man answering, said, *Lord, that I receive my sight.* Then Jesus said unto him, *receive thy sight; thy faith has made thee sound.* And the man immediately received his sight, and followed Jesus, glorifying God, and the whole multitude along with him.

This blind man, the holy Fathers say, is an image of all those who continually gratify their passions upon earth, in open violation of the divine law. In fact, Christians, what can argue a greater blindness, than to prefer the empty pleasures of this life, which last but a single moment, to the pure, substantial, and everlasting joys of the kingdom of Heaven? the riches of this world, which must shortly perish and decay, to the incorruptible treasures of Heaven? the honours and distinctions of this life, which are nothing in themselves, to the immortal crowns of glory reserved for us in the kingdom of Heaven? What can argue a
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greater blindness than to know we may die every moment, and yet live in such a state, as, that if we chance to die therein, we must be for ever excluded from the kingdom of God, and condemned for ever to the devouring flames of hell? What can argue a greater blindness than to expect the Almighty God will forgive us, at the last hour, the manifold transgressions of a long and iniquitous life; and besides, admit us into the kingdom of Heaven, as he has assured us himself of the reverse in holy writ, saying, *I have called upon you (that is, by my holy grace) and you have refused to answer my call; the day shall therefore come, when you shall seek me and shall not find me, and you shall die in your sins.* What can argue a greater blindness in a word, than to believe there is a God above us, who will bring us to account for all the views and transactions of our life, and condemn all sinners to everlasting punishment; and yet live in such a manner as if virtue were vice, and our vicious actions and transgressions alone were to be rewarded, not punished?

Every sinner, therefore, is most justly compared to the blindman, mentioned in the Gospel of this day; as he is in reality blind to all the true interests and concerns of his soul. However, the blind man in question recovered his sight from Christ Jesus. But shall those amongst us that are blind to the interests of their souls, ever acquire a true sense of their blindness, or a true knowledge of their errors? Shall they ever see the miseries they are in? the dangers they are exposed to? the dreadful and lamentable end that must terminate all their sinful courses of life? shall they ever pass from the darkness of iniquity, to the true light of justice and righteousness? They should, indeed, Christians, did they make a proper application for that purpose, unto Christ Jesus, like the blind man mentioned in the Gospel of this day. For Christ is the heavenly light--- *the true light*, St. John says, *which enlightens every man who cometh into this world.*

Let us, therefore, most earnestly beseech our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ to open our eyes; to give us a thorough sense of the littleness, insignificance, and nothingness of every thing that is created; the value
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and excellence of all that is eternal and divine: to make us sensible of the folly and extravagance of forfeiting every title to the kingdom of Heaven, for a moment's pleasure upon earth. In a word, to know our errors and correct them. In order to this, let us say with the Royal Prophet, *Enlighten our eyes, O Lord, lest they be closed in death, and sealed in eternal darkness. Make known unto us the ways we are to walk in, because we have lifted up our souls unto thee, O Lord.* It is not riches, or pleasures, or distinctions, we call for, but the light of thy holy grace: that light which alone is capable of dispelling the clouds of darkness, that hang over our minds; of guiding safely our steps in the intricate ways that lead to life, and giving us at length admittance to that immortal glory, and that splendour which springs forth incessantly in the kingdom of Heaven. *Amen.*

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT.

THE spirit by which Christ Jesus was led into the desert, was his own divine spirit, or the spirit of God; and the motive which induced him to retire into the desert or wilderness, was, that he should stand exposed to the temptations of the devil; and that, Christians, for our instruction and consolation. For, when we see the Son of God tempted, in various shapes, by the evil spirit, surely no one should be surprised to meet with the like temptations within himself. However, we are not to imagine that all our temptations come immediately from the evil spirit. No: they mostly arise from ourselves, and have their source in the corruption of our human nature; or that concupiscence, or strong propensity to evil, which is born with us, and is one of the penalties of original sin, or the sin of our first parents. Nevertheless it cannot be denied, but the evil spirit doth frequently interfere, and urge us powerfully to sin, by painting seducing images in our ideas, and creating evil suggestions in
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our minds; for *our great enemy the devil*, St. Peter says, *is continually roaming about, seeking whom to devour.* And the Apostle St. Paul says, *every man is tempted by himself; drawn and enticed by his own concupiscence.* From these several considerations---the weakness and depravity of human nature in general, the gaudy shew and seducing figure of this world, the hatred and malice of the evil spirit to all mankind, it is plain we must be tempted, and frequently and violently tempted, during the whole course of our lives. But what should comfort us, Christians, is 1st, That temptation is not a sin; which appears plainly from the example of Christ Jesus, who suffered himself to be tempted by the evil spirit in the desert. It is only an incitement to sin; not sin itself. 2d, It is in our power always, by the grace of God, to resist and overcome the strongest temptations. For *God is faithful*, St. Paul says, *and will not suffer you to be tempted beyond your strength; but will give you in the very temptation strength enough to resist it.* The evil spirit, St. Austin says, is like a furious dog at his chain. He may bark and threaten and attack; but he can never hurt you, if you do not go within his reach. The misfortune is, that people seldom or ever take any pains to resist the temptation. They yield the moment they are attacked, at least they make but a very weak resistance; and then they think it a sufficient excuse to say, I had not the grace to resist the temptation. But this, Christians, is a very great, and a very prejudicial mistake; because we always have sufficient grace to do our duty, and can have, by means of prayer, or an humble and fervent application to God, further helps to enable us to overcome any temptation whatsoever; so that if we fall without resisting the temptation, it is intirely owing to ourselves, and not to the want of grace. What should comfort us, in the third place, is, that every temptation we resist and overcome, from a motive of religion, adds to our merit upon earth, and to our rewards in Heaven. For the Apostle says, *Happy the man that suffers temptation; because that after being tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which God hath promised to those that love him.* What we then have to do, Christians, in the time of temptation,

temptation, is, to bear up strongly against it, to call on the Almighty God, through the merits of Christ Jesus, for further assistance; to bring unto our aid, some of the great principles of religion, the joys of Heaven, the eternal torments of Hell, the command that God has laid upon us of loving and serving him alone; saying with Christ Jesus in the desert,--- *Begin, Satan; for it is written, the Lord thy God shalt thou adore; and him alone shalt thou serve.*

Before Christ Jesus would suffer himself to be tempted by the evil spirit in the desert, he was pleased to fast forty days and forty nights; after which he grew hungry, as the Gospel says: and this, Christians, was undoubtedly to set us the example of fasting, and shew us how we are to prepare and arm ourselves against the various temptations of life. 'Tis in imitation of this fast of Christ Jesus, that the Lent has been instituted in the Church, from the very beginning; and enforced by a particular command, which obliges all those that have attained to the age of one and twenty, or thereabouts, under pain of mortal sin. The solemn fast of Lent has been placed in this season of the year, chiefly to dispose the faithful for the great solemnity of Easter. As there is an obligation upon all the faithful, who are grown up to the years of discretion, to receive the blessed sacrament at Easter; the Church employs the most effectual methods, to prepare them properly for that purpose; such as fasting, praying, humiliation and alms; the very exercises peculiar to the holy season, we are entering upon.

For be pleased to consider, that all the faithful in general may be divided into two classes—those that are in a state of Grace, and those that are in a state of sin. To those that are in a state of Sin, nothing can be more profitable than fasting, as the virtue and efficacy thereof are declared in many places in holy writ; for the Lord says in the 2d. Ch. of Joel, *convert unto me in fasting and weeping*; moreover Christ Jesus says, *there is a kind of evil spirit that cannot be expelled but by fasting and prayer*; and the reason of this, as Divines observe, is, that the Almighty God, to deter us the more from sin, is not pleased to grant
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at once unto every sinner the grace of repentance, but requires that we humble ourselves in his presence, by fasting, weeping and prayer. But when we do humble our Souls in this manner, when we fast, and weep and pray, in a spirit of repentance, and with a view to the merits of Christ Jesus, the Almighty never refuses to grant us the grace of a true and solid conversion.

This is the reason, Christians, why Lent has been looked upon by the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, as a season of spiritual blessings; because it is a time set apart for humiliation, fasting, and prayer, which are the most powerful methods religion can suggest, for returning sincerely unto the Lord. *Ecce nunc tempus acceptabile.* And as for those that may be in a state of Grace, or in favour with Almighty God, nothing can be more useful or meritorious than fasting: for 1st. *Prayer*, the Holy Ghost declares (1ob. 12.) *is good with fasting*; whence it plainly appears that prayer derives great virtue and efficacy from fasting. 2d. Christ Jesus has promised a particular reward to fasting; for we read in the gospel, that he addressed his Disciples in manner following, *when you fast, be not of a sad countenance, like hypocrites: for they disfigure their faces, that to men they may appear fasting. Amen I say unto you they have received their reward. But thou, when thou dost fast, anoint thy head and wash thy face, that thou appear not fasting unto men, but to your Heavenly father who is in private; and thy Heavenly Father who is in private, will reward thee.* Here is then a reward promised unto fasting; from whence it appears, that fasting is one of the most meritorious works of Religion. Fasting, the Holy Fathers say, enlightens the mind and purifies the heart. It banishes all idle imaginations and suppresses all evil desires. It weans the soul from all unlawful pleasures, and disposes it, to enter into the most intimate union and communication with the Divinity.

Let us therefore, Christians, deem it a happiness to have lived to this Holy season; and firmly resolve within ourselves, to go through it with fidelity and courage. Let us not only fast, but fast in the manner

ner prescribed by the Church, abstaining punctually from all sort of forbidden food, and contenting ourselves with one single meal, and a slender, very slender refection at night. Should we transgress any one of these points, we commit a mortal sin. Let us not only fast, but fast with a spirit of religion, by offering up our fast in union with the fast of Christ Jesus, to atone for our past sins. The spirit may indeed tempt us to transgress and break the fast, as he did Christ Jesus in the desert saying, *command that these stones be made bread*: But remember what our Saviour answered, *it is not by bread alone that man liveth; but by every word that cometh from the mouth of God*.

This is perhaps the last Lent a great many of us will ever see. Let us therefore make the proper use of it, and turn it to the greatest advantage unto our souls; by keeping this Lent properly, we can obtain the Grace of God, which is undoubtedly beyond all the treasures upon Earth; atone for our past sins and transgressions, and make great additions to the rewards that are prepared for us in the life to come. On the contrary, if we do not keep the Lent and keep it properly; if upon slender pretences we sue for, and make use of any exemption, or dispensation from fasting, we commit a very heinous sin in the eyes of the Lord, deprive ourselves of his holy grace; and add to the treasure of wrath that is reserved for us in the life to come. Fasting, I own, is not agreeable to flesh and blood; but it is wholesome for the soul and agreeable to God. It weakens the constitution, but then it checks and lowers the passions. It deprives us of many sensual gratifications, but it procures us many spiritual and inestimable blessings. It destroys the terrestrial part of Man, but it forms, strengthens and perfects the spiritual and celestial part.

What advantages these, Christians, and how worthy our attention! Let us therefore enter upon this laborious career of fasting and penance, with spirit and resolution. *The Almighty will finish and bring to perfection*, the Apostle says, *what he hath already begun with his holy Grace*; and thereby enable us to reap in the end, the happy fruits of our long and penitential course—

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his holy Grace in this life and eternal happiness in the next. *Amen.*

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT.

IT was usual with our Saviour, as often as he preached up the cross to his Disciples, to remind them of the rewards reserved for them in the life to come; in order that the hopes of the recompence might excite their courage to bear up against the hardships they were continually to struggle with. But on this occasion, Christians, he does more; to some of them he shews a glimpse of the beatific vision, of that glory he enjoyed before the formation of the world. *And leading them up into a high mountain, he was transfigured before them. And his face did shine as the sun; and his garments became white as snow. And lo! a voice cried out from the Heavens, saying this is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him.* Enraptured with the glory that surrounded him and equally unmindful of past, as of future sufferings, Peter breaks out, *Lord, it is good for us to be here.* Such are the hints conveyed by the scripture of the glory of Heaven, from the transfiguration of Christ on the mountain. His countenance became brilliant like the sun, and his garments like snow; because in nature nothing is whiter than snow, nor more brilliant than the sun. They are figurative words, inexpressive of the reality; the contemplation of which should support us under the calamities annexed to this life, and make us look with disdain upon the gaudy appearance of this world, and solicit only a slender *portion in the land of the living.* But who is it that thinks seriously of the eternal concerns of his soul? grown terrestrial by the indulgence of our senses, the pursuits of this world, and its vanities, the very notion of Heaven seems banished from our minds. The Gospel every where tells you, that Heaven is a reward: to obtain it, you must take care to merit it upon earth; without you merit, you will not obtain it
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and to encourage you to merit it, the church invites you this day to some reflections on it, and remind you how worthy it is of all your labours.

The contemplation of Heaven has been, in all ages, the support and comfort of all the followers of God. It is called in the apocalypse *the holy Jerusalem*, whose walls are built of precious stones; its streets paved with pure gold; the river of life runs through it, and on its banks springs up the tree, whose fruit conveys immortality and health; where *night shall be no more: and they shall not need the light of the lamp, nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God shall enlighten them, and they shall reign for ever and ever.* This is but a faint idea of what Heaven is, adapted to what we conceive most valuable upon Earth, as pure gold and precious stones: for St. Paul, after being elevated to the throne of God, could only declare, *the eye hath not seen, nor the ear ever heard, nor the heart of man ever conceived, what God hath prepared for those that love him.* The impossibility this eloquent and inspired Apostle lay under of explaining it, should convey the highest notion of its grandeur; for God there shews himself a God, in the rewards he bestows on his friends: *I myself am your protector and your very great reward:* all other happiness but that of Heaven is deceitful from its uncertainty, its fluctuation, and its shortness. Felicity in this life is extremely uncertain, but it is grounded in Heaven, on the surest foundations; here it is vain and superficial, there solid and substantial; here fleeting, there permanent; here momentary, there eternal.

There can be no real happiness, says St. Austin, de Civ. Dei lib. 20, *where there is the least doubt:* and is not doubt interwoven with all the happiness of this world? where is the man that can safely rely on his attaining even to a share of that felicity which this mortal life affords! consult those who have laboured many years in the pursuit of honour. After exposing themselves to the hazards of war; after courting perhaps the occasions of spilling their blood, what reward have they received? very often in gratitude or ill will; their greatest services frequently overlooked,

looked, or their fidelity questioned. Consult those, who placing their felicity in rank and distinction make them the objects of their pursuits. After employing all the arts their vanity could suggest, to raise themselves to the highest stations, what success do they generally meet with? Instead of compassing their ambitious views, for the most part, disappointment and shame to see themselves supplanted and depressed by those very persons whom they intended to leave at the greatest distance behind them, Let us likewise consult those who place their happiness in riches, how far they succeed in their designs, in laying down many well concerted schemes, and pursuing them with the greatest vigilance and care? They frequently meet with one continued scene of misfortunes, which, from the greatest opulence, bring them down to the lowest degree of indigence and obscurity. Hence it is plain, that nothing can be more uncertain than the happiness of this world; and this is the common course of things in life. The images it presents us with, are enough to allure from afar and seduce any one that is not guarded against them, by the principles of faith, or the strongest reflections. Its pomp and figure, its shews and diversions, its pleasures and amusements, shine refulgently at a distance: but upon examination they are found to be no better than painted clouds, which have scarce any existence; or those gentle fires, that kindle in the night, retire before you as fast as you pursue them, and afford no more of their malignant light, than what is sufficient to point out the way to your destruction. On the other hand, we have all the certainty we can require in the promise of God, who being essential truth, can neither deceive nor be deceived. This God I say has promised a share of his kingdom and of that glory he himself enjoys, unto all his faithful servants, which is so certain, as to form a fundamental article in our creed--life everlasting. Almighty God has not only promised, but fulfilled his promise to all those who were entitled thereto; for the just that have lived upon earth, and atoned sufficiently for their slightest offences, are now in possession of the kingdom of Heaven,

ven, in virtue of God's promise; as laid down by S. John, *And I saw a great multitude which no man could reckon, of all tribes and countries and nations*, in the actual enjoyment of the glory of God. What greater encouragement can there be to a pious and christian life, than to know that it leads surely to happiness? In every other pursuit we are liable to disappointment; but here we have the infallible promise of God to depend on, as surely as the Almighty is unchangeable in his nature and infallible in his word; so sure is the possession of eternal happiness to those that are really deserving of it.

This dependance on the promise of a God, supported and animated the courage of the Martyrs amidst the most cruel torments; some were stretched upon the rack, others plunged into cauldrons of melted lead or boiling oil; some were roasted, others torn with hooks and laid on burning coals; yet when they lifted up their eyes towards Heaven to contemplate the rewards of their fidelity, they could endure all these tortures, not only with courage and resolution, but with extacy and delight. This dependance on the promise of a God, led many thousands in all ages from the pleasures of the world, into the wildest desarts, there to spend their lives in solitude, prayer, fasting, mortification and penance. The severest austerities seemed unto them light and agreeable; because they knew the joys of Heaven were to be their reward. This dependance likewise on the promise of a God, induces many thousands, even in our own days, in all christian countries, either to renounce the world entirely, or *to live in the world as though they were not in it*, and employ themselves entirely in the practices of good works; because they know that Heaven is to be their reward. This dependance on the promise of a God, and the expectation of eternal happiness in Heaven, should make the like impressions on our minds. Most of you have been labouring in this world for many years. For what purpose? where is the fruit of all your labours? at least where will it be in a few years, perhaps a few days hence? what more will then remain of all the glory

glory and happiness of this life, but a handful of dust and ashes? Turn your thoughts therefore upon Heaven; where your reward is not only sure, but solid and substantial, abounding in felicity.

All the happiness of this life when weighed in the scale of reason what does it amount to?---a transient pause, a slight cessation from pain. Can it satisfy the mind or content our desires? does it not rather leave after it a constant craving for something better, or more agreeable? consult your own experience. All your past pleasures, your diversions, amusements, rioting and joys, what did they all avail you the moment they were passed? far from affording any real satisfaction, did they not leave behind the cruel remorse of having wasted your time, impaired your circumstances, defiled your conscience, and offended Almighty God? whence it follows, there neither is nor can be any real happiness upon earth; and that by a particular providence of God, as St. Austin observes, who framed our hearts in such a manner as not to be able to fix or settle in any object but himself alone. But in heaven 'tis quite the reverse. There we are to enjoy the height of felicity by all that gratifies the mind or sense. Here below even those who seem to enjoy the compleatest happiness, are perpetually disturbed either by the restlessness of their own minds, which is a cross, we necessarily carry about us, or the frame of their constitution, which is, essentially liable to sickness, the inclemency of the seasons, the feebleness and dissolution of age: so that we may justly say with the wisest of Men, that all the happiness this world affords, is no more at bottom than *vanity and affliction of spirit*. But in Heaven, I say, there are neither anxieties, nor sufferings, nor complaint; nor moan, nor anguish, nor sorrow: there the tears shall be wiped away from your eyes, to make way for the torrent of delights which flow from the throne of God: there you shall see *face to face*, him, whom here below, you adore through faith. There, the fountains of the living God, shall pour forth on you, torrents of delights, ever new, ever encreasing, never cloying. There, after
the

the resurrection, the faithful companion of the soul on earth, the sharer of its sufferings, the partner of its good works---the body, shall partake in its joys. The eye shall be delighted with the view of God and the beauty and grandeur of the Heavenly Jerusalem and all its illustrious inhabitants; the ear enchanted with melodious canticles of praise, and the heart drowned in extacy of joys, which necessarily flow from an immediate union with God. But listen, Christians, the glory of Heaven is never to end.

No happiness can be deemed completely so, that is limited in its duration, because the time must necessarily come when it will cease to exist. But this danger is removed with regard to Heaven; as it is to last as long as God himself; that is, for ever and ever. For the gospel says, *the just shall go at the last day to eternal life*. Conceive then, if you can, how grand is that state, wherein joys infinitely superior to any thing this world can administer, must flow for ever without interruption or end. Already near 1800 years have passed, since those who ascended with Christ into Heaven, are in possession of the glory he purchased for them; and in eighteen hundred millions of years, their happiness will not be so much as beginning; because in eternity there is neither beginning nor end; and that their happiness, like unto that of God himself, always subsists uniformly without variation or limitation. What is become, let me ask, of all the great and happy men, that lived eighteen hundred years ago in the world, *who placed not their glory in the glory of God?* The monuments erected to their fame are mouldered into dust; their actions forgotten; their names buried in oblivion, and all their glories vanished like a shadow.

Consider now, Christians, the joys of Heaven are the precious reward of a godly life. Consider, I beseech you, the terrible words of St. Paul, *neither drunkards nor revilers, the effeminate or covetous shall ever inherit the kingdom of God*. To enter Heaven you must fulfill the law upon earth, as Christ Jesus directs, *if thou hast a mind to enter into eternal life, keep the commandments*. Now the whole law consists in

avoiding every excess, and fulfilling all righteousness; so as to exercise piety towards God, justice and charity towards our neighbour, sobriety and reservedness towards ourselves. This is the only way to Heaven. Whoever pursues any other road, goes the broad way to perdition. This is the *Crown of Justice* which must be won by many victories over our enemies, the flesh, the world and the spirit of darkness. The conflict may be sharp and severe; but by the grace of God, victory will always declare for us. Nothing can be deemed sharp or severe which leads to eternal happiness and makes us masters of the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is offered to those who live up to the rules of christianity. Let us endeavour to obtain it. Who can complain of a few moments hardship, which is productive of an eternal weight of glory in heaven? Let us forsake our wicked ways and give our hearts sincerely unto the Lord, and he will abundantly repay us in his own kingdom hereafter. *Amen.*

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT.

CAN any thing be more surprising, Christians, than the obstinacy and fury, with which the Pharisees persecuted Christ Jesus? every action of his life was to them an occasion of exerting their fury and malice. Even those actions which carried with them the most visible character and stamp of Godliness, could not escape their censure; for we read in this day's Gospel, that, *after Christ Jesus had cast out in their presence, a Devil that was dumb; they cried out immediately and said, it was in Belzebul the Prince of Devils, or by virtue of a power derived from him, that Jesus had cast out the evil spirit.* Although nothing could be more absurd than this assertion, as it could never be conceived, that the Prince of the Devils would employ his own power, or suffer it to be employed to his own ruin and destruction; and as every kingdom that is divided in
itself,

itself, as our Saviour says, *must fall into desolation*; yet the Pharisees did not---would not conceive it, whilst the croud was struck with admiration, at the miracle that was wrought before their eyes; and upon seeing the man who had been dumb for many years, in consequence of the evil spirit he was possessed with, open his lips and speak freely; the Pharisees on the contrary were filled with indignation, and used their utmost endeavours to blacken the reputation of Christ Jesus, to prevent any glory that might result from it, by attributing the miracle to the power of the Prince of darkness; so great was their prejudice and prepossession against the son of God and redeemer of mankind.

From this passage we may learn what dreadful consequences attend the passion of envy and malice, and how destructive a thing it is for any one to suffer himself to be led or governed thereby. In the Pharisees it went so far, as to attack the very person of Christ Jesus, and load him with the most severe aspersions. In us it does not go so far indeed, but how often does it prompt a great many, to attack the members of Christ, or their brethren in Christ, by censuring them unjustly, or making them the subject of slander and detraction.

This is, Christians, one of the most prevailing vices, not only of this country, but of all the countries upon the earth: and what is still worse, is, that people generally seem not to make the least account thereof; yet detraction is undoubtedly a very heinous crime; a mortal sin, and a very considerable transgression of the law of God; for St. Paul declares, *that detractors are hateful to God*. Now nothing can make us hateful to God, but a material breach of his law: besides the same Gospel says, that *all those that do detract, will never enter the kingdom of Heaven*; from whence it plainly follows, that detraction or slander must be a most heinous sin and transgression, inasmuch as it is capable of excluding us for ever from the kingdom of Heaven.

But what does slander or detraction consist in? It consists, Christians, in saying or revealing any thing

that may hurt your neighbour's character. It differs from a calumny in this, that by calumny you accuse your neighbour wrongfully, and charge him with a crime or fault he was never guilty of, whereas by slander or detraction you only reveal or publish such crimes or faults, as he has actually been guilty of, in private; the publishing of which cannot but be a prejudice to his character. 'Tis no excuse to say, that you have advanced nothing but what was true, and strictly true. For though it was true, you had no right to publish it the moment it was private, and could be prejudicial to your neighbour: and if you have advanced a truth, that was to your neighbour's prejudice, you certainly have sinned, and grievously sinned; and that, Divines say, against charity and justice: 1st. against charity; because the law of charity requires, that you treat your neighbour, as you would be treated by him yourself. Now let me ask, if you would be well pleased, if your neighbour published your faults, your most secret faults, or failings; and thereby exposed you to the censure of the public? undoubtedly not. Why then will you not behave towards him, as you would have him behave towards you, upon a like occasion? And if you do not, most certainly you transgress the second great precept of the law; or that precept which enjoins you to love your neighbour as yourself. 2d. it is a sin against justice: for a man's character is his property, as much as any thing he may be possessed of; nay, by far the most valuable part of his property; as a good name is valued more by all persons of principle, than all the riches of the world. If therefore, Christians, you take away any part of your neighbour's character, you strip him in reality of the richest possession he is master of, which is manifestly a breach of justice.

Seeing therefore, Christians, detraction is so heinous a sin, is it not astonishing, that people who pretend to have the fear of God before them, and to act upon principles of conscience, should so frequently be guilty of it? how many are there in the world, that would die before they would think of robbing their

their neighbour of any part of his worldly substance, yet, make no difficulty in robbing him of what is vastly more to be esteemed; the good opinion of the world: their neighbour is eternally the subject of their discourse. The moment they hear any thing to his discredit, they can have no rest, until they disclose the deadly secret to the first they meet. The real or pretended crime is handed about from house to house, until it spreads through the whole town; and from the town throughout the country: thus it is, a Christian is frequently destroyed and decryed, and that by the uncharitableness, the indiscretion or the criminal slander of other christians, for which they must account at the bar of God's justice.

But is it a sin to repeat what one has heard to the prejudice of their neighbour? undoubtedly it is a very great sin; 1st. because all general reports are commonly found upon examination to be groundless; and surely it can never be lawful, to do real and certain injury upon a flying and uncertain report. 2d. Although the imputation were certain and well grounded; yet if the crime is private, and may become prejudicial to your neighbour, you are bound in conscience and in charity to your brother in Christ, not to speak of it. If the imputation was certain and public, it alters the case; because one loses and forfeits, in that case, all the right he had to the good opinion of mankind. Further it frequently happens that persons are guilty of detraction, although they should not say one word; and that by approving or encouraging the detraction, with a wink, nod, shrug, smile, affected pause or stop: for St. Paul says, *not only detractors, but likewise those that consent to the detraction, shall be excluded for ever from the kingdom of Heaven.*

You see, Christians, how easy it is for one to commit a considerable sin, in point of detraction; since we become guilty by the very encouragement we give thereto: how then is a person to behave in an occasion of the kind, wherein he sees his neighbour traduced by evil tongues? 1st, He is bound in conscience not to join in the detraction, or approve of it; 2d, He

is bound in conscience, if he knows the falsehood of the imputation, to oppose it with prudence and discretion; and thereby vindicate his neighbour's character. Our Saviour says in the Gospel of this day, *He that is not with me is against me*; whence it follows, it is not enough upon several occasions, when the law of God is violated before our eyes, to be silent or barely passive: 3d, If it should happen, that we neither know the falseness of the imputation, nor have authority enough to oppose the person that detracts, who may be of a superior rank, we are then obliged in conscience, to show our dislike to the detraction, either by our silence, or a certain severity in our countenance, or frequently by quitting the company without delay.

Detraction is not only a heinous sin, but likewise a sin which must be repaired and retracted publicly: 1st, For, as an act of injustice, it requires a reparation, as much as if you had robbed your neighbour of his worldly substance, as far as lies in your power; either by retracting publicly the evil you had said of him, if it was a false aspersion; or by commending him in other respects, and upon other occasions, if the aspersion was true. 2d, If your neighbour has suffered in his business or substance, by your detraction; you are bound in conscience to make restitution for the losses he sustained: without this reparation the sin will never be forgiven, although you should be fasting and praying for a hundred years.

But what is this envy, so prejudicial and destructive to mankind? It is a displeasure at the good of our neighbour, either in his person, fortune or preferment; which it is plain, is utterly inconsistent with the spirit of religion. As Christians we are obliged to wish each other well, and even contribute to the welfare of others, as often as they stand in need of our assistance. Nothing therefore can be more repugnant to the spirit of Christianity, nor, consequently more criminal in the sight of God, than that passion which stifles every humane affection, every sentiment of benevolence in the heart; yet how many are there, that daily obey the dictates of this inhuman passion;

passion? How many are there, that always hear with dislike their neighbour commended? that repine at his success, and rejoice in his misfortunes? an envious eye is offended at every thing, that sets his neighbour above himself; and pleased at every misfortune that pulls him down to the lowest rank. Nor is this passion confined to the sentiments of the heart. No, it shews itself in our actions, but chiefly in our words. Divines assure us, that one half of mankind are damned for detraction: for 1st, it is plain to every one, that nothing can be more common than detraction; and 2d, nothing more uncommon than making the least reparation for it. Whence it follows, that this sin is seldom or never atoned for by repentance, and, consequently, it must bring about our eternal perdition, push us to the grave, from the grave to the tribunal of God, and from the tribunal of God, to the devouring flames of Hell. Should not this consideration alone, Christians, give us all the utmost abhorrence to detraction? *Happy is the man, the Apostle says, that doth not offend with the tongue.*

Let us therefore guard these dangerous tongues, for fear of offending our brethren; and, by offending our brethren, offend Almighty God; who in punishment of our sins, will certainly exclude us from the kingdom of Heaven. Let us, I say, be silent for ever, rather than speak to the prejudice of our brethren, and in open violation of the Divine Law. By reducing ourselves to silence for a time, from a principle of Christian charity upon earth, we shall be at liberty to employ our tongues for ever in praising and magnifying the great eternal God, amidst choirs of Angels and celestial spirits, enraptured with joys and glory in the kingdom of Heaven. *Amen.*

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

IT is hard to say and determine, Christians, which we are mostly to admire in the Gospel of this day, the unwearied zeal and religious dispositions of the croud that followed Christ Jesus beyond the Sea of Galilee, that is a large lake which divided Galilee from the rest of the country; or the extraordinary goodness and bounty of Christ Jesus, who was pleased to relieve the croud in their distress, by a very signal and memorable miracle. It was very natural indeed, that those who had seen the miraculous cures, which Christ Jesus wrought upon the sick, as we are told in the Gospel of this day, should have conceived in consequence thereof, a very high opinion of his power and benevolence: but that they should quit their habitations and follow Christ Jesus in crowds into the desert; unmindful of their families, unmindful of their business, and unmindful of themselves, as numbers of the Jews did, on the occasion we are speaking of, argues plainly a very great fund of religion, and a very extraordinary attachment to the person of Christ Jesus. By this proceeding they manifestly shewed, that they prized and valued the instructions they received from Christ Jesus, concerning the ways of Salvation, more than all the advantages of this world. To follow Christ and share in the spiritual blessings he was daily dispensing, or distributing amongst them, was the only object of their desires. Every other consideration either gave way to this, or was entirely banished from their thoughts. *Happy are those*, says our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, *that thirst after justice, for they shall be filled*; that is, happy are those that have a sincere and ardent desire of learning the ways of Heaven and walking therein; of knowing the will of God, and fulfilling it in every point; for they shall be satisfied, both in this world and in the world to come: in this world by the inward pleasure and consolations, that necessarily attend a
just

just and virtuous life; and in the world to come, by partaking eternally of the fullest and purest joys of the kingdom of Heaven.

It was not possible, Christians, to shew a greater longing after justice than that multitude had shewn, which followed Christ Jesus into the desert, without making the least provision for themselves, although at their risk of perishing with famine. Are these the sentiments of our hearts? have we the same desire, the same zeal, the same eagerness that the multitude had, for the things of God? have we sacrificed, or are we even ready to sacrifice the least interest of this world, for the advantage of our souls? Alas! do we not daily sacrifice the eternal concerns of our Souls, to the most trifling advantages of this world? what we are most uneasy about, and what we thirst after with the greatest eagerness of desire, is not the knowledge of the eternal truths of salvation; or the fulfilling of all justice; but such things as contribute to the happiness of this life: nevertheless Christ Jesus has said, *seek first the kingdom of Heaven before all things, and the rest shall be given unto you.*

This was plainly and fully verified with regard to the multitude that followed Christ Jesus into the desert: for after seating himself upon the mountain, whence he could view the whole multitude, that had been fasting three days, he took pity on them; and would not dismiss them before he made them eat, lest they might perish in the way. For this purpose, he enquired of his disciples how he could purchase provisions to feed the multitude that came after him. The disciples answered. *That a considerable sum could not buy provisions enough, to give even a small share to every one of the croud:* another then said, *there was indeed a boy that had five barley loaves and two fishes; but what was that to so many persons, and so great a multitude as five thousand men.* Christ Jesus however ordered the multitude to be seated on the grass, and taking the loaves, he gave thanks, and distributed them amongst the croud, and the fishes in like manner; and the whole multitude was plentifully fed therewith.

Every thing here, Christians, is most worthy of remark. 1st, Christ Jesus was pleased before he would work the miracle, to address his Heavenly Father, to shew us, that all blessings are derived from the Almighty God, the source of all goodness; and consequently, that it is from him we are to expect, and to him we are to apply for relief, in the time of calamity or distress. This indeed we are very sensible of, with regard to any temporal want or necessity. For the moment we meet with any crosses or misfortunes in the world, we never fail calling upon the Almighty God for relief, and reminding him, of his being the tender and universal parent of mankind. But do we behave in the same manner, in reference to our spiritual wants and necessities? do we apply to the Almighty God with the same readiness and sincerity for his divine assistance?---the graces that are necessary to subdue our passions, overcome our temptations, fulfill, in a word, every essential obligation of Religion? do we beseech him fervently and frequently, to refuse us, nay, deprive us of every thing that may be the occasion of sin and an obstacle to our salvation? No: this is seldom or never the case. Nevertheless spiritual blessings are the only things, that the Almighty God has promised to grant us, as appears from these words of our blessed Saviour in the Gospel, *whatsoever you ask according to the will of my Father shall be granted you*: because nothing can be agreeable to the will of God, but what is conducive to our Salvation. As for temporal blessings, the Almighty never promised them, but with some restrictions; nor is it lawful for us to call for them, but as far as they may be conducive to the glory of God, and the good of our souls. But our misfortune is, that we are more anxious for the frail and perishable advantages of this world, which we cannot frequently obtain, than for the graces of God, which are extremely valuable in themselves, and would certainly be granted if we applied for them with humility and fervour.

2d. Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ was not satisfied with encreasing the scanty share of provision his

his Disciples had, as far as was necessary to feed the multitude; he was moreover pleased to produce and create such a plenty and abundance, as left a large quantity of provisions remaining; in order, as the Holy Fathers say, to shew us how liberal and bountiful he is, to all those that love and serve him. The goodness of God will not suffer him, Christians, to keep any measure with his faithful servants: he not only rewards them, but rewards them beyond their own expectations, and in a manner worthy of a God: This is what St. Paul means, when he says, *where sin abounded, Grace or goodness of God abounded more.*

What impressions, Christians, should not these instances of divine bounty make upon our minds, and hearts? had we been witnesses to, and partakers of the miraculous relief granted to the multitude in the desert, how powerfully must we have been affected thereby? undoubtedly we should have cried out along with them, *this is the Prophet indeed who was to come into the world.*

But be pleased to observe, that there is not a single day of our lives, in which we are not witnesses to many acts of equal, if not superior goodness on the part of the Almighty: For, as St. Augustine justly observes upon this occasion, is it more astonishing, the Almighty should have fed five thousand men in the desert, than daily feed the whole race of mankind? undoubtedly it is not. Yet this he daily performs, by producing the various fruits of the earth on which we live. The air we breathe, the life we enjoy, and the food we consume, are the precious and continual gifts of his bountiful hand. But these miracles of bounty, being so very common, are constantly overlooked. Yet surely the more frequent they are, the more they should be valued and prized, as they are new and accumulated proofs of the bounty of God. If one single favor, of consequence is sufficient to draw our attention, and excite our admiration, what effect should continual and uninterrupted instances of divine love produce?

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Let us then learn at length, to distinguish the inexpressible bounty and goodness of the Almighty God, in all his works, and throughout the whole system of his providence. Considerations of this kind will certainly excite our hearts to a just return of gratitude and love; which will one day entitle us to all the joys and glory of the kingdom of Heaven; where the Almighty God communicates, and will ever communicate, his love, to all his true and faithful servants without measure or reserve. *Amen.*

PASSION SUNDAY.

AMONGST the many calumnies the Jews and Pharisees were accustomed to throw upon our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, never did any one of them dare to charge him with any transgression of the law. They often reproached him with being possessed of a devil, or casting out evil spirits in Belzebub, or in virtue of a power derived from the prince of devils. They even called him a Samaritan, as appears from the Gospel of this day, which was a very great injury amongst the Jews; as the Samaritans, or inhabitants of Samaria, were professedly schismatics, inasmuch as they had separated themselves from the rest of the Jews, set up a false worship of their own in Samaria, and refused going to Jerusalem to join in the Temple in the true worship of God, in which alone it was lawful to pay him any public worship or adoration. But we do not read that they ever accused our Saviour with any sinful or immoral action. Nay, in the Gospel of this day, he challenges them to declare if ever he was guilty of a crime. This, indeed, could not be said of any other but the Son of God; as he alone was incapable of sin by nature, and as mankind in general are sinners, born in sin and liable to sin, so long as they live.

1st, They are born in sin: For St. Paul declares, we are all born *children of wrath*; sinners of course, since

since nothing but sin could draw the displeasure of the Almighty upon us, at an age in which we are intirely incapable of doing a good or an evil action. This is, Christians, what divines call original sin; that sin or transgression of the first universal parent of mankind, which has been, by a most dreadful judgment of the Lord, intailed upon all his unhappy posterity to the end of time. For after our first parents had transgressed the command the Almighty had given them, not to eat of the forbidden fruit in the garden of Paradise, they were immediately punished for their transgression, not only in themselves, but in their descendants for ever; as all those that were to descend from them were in some measure comprized in the transgressors themselves. But what did the punishment consist in, so far as it related to our first parents personally? It consisted in stripping them of all the great privileges and qualifications they had been endowed and vested with in their creation. For it cannot be doubted, but the first parents of mankind came from the hands of God, adorned with such virtues and perfections as became creatures formed to the likeness and image of the divinity. And this is the reason the Holy Ghost assures us, that *God had made man upright*; that is, blessed with uprightness; and the Royal Prophet declares, that in his primitive state, man was scarcely inferior to the Angels themselves. *Thou hast made him little less than the Angels*, Ps. 8. But as soon as they transgressed the divine command, they were degraded to the lowest degree both in soul and body. Then they forfeited the innocence, integrity, and uprightness they were created in, and became liable to eternal damnation, which would infallibly have ensued, if the Almighty in his infinite mercy had not even then vouchsafed to promise them a Redeemer, by whose merits they might be saved. Then likewise they forfeited the great privilege of immortality they had been vested with in their creation, and would have enjoyed for ever, were it not for their disobedience. Then, in fine, they were banished the delicious garden of Paradise, made subject to death, and all the miseries incident to human life.

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So far the punishment related to our first parents themselves. But what does it consist in, with respect to their posterity? In this, that in consequence of their disobedience, we are all born in sin and concupiscence, subject to death and all the calamities we labour under in this world. For St. Paul declares, that *death is the wages of sin*, and that it is *by sin death entered into the world*. Had our first parents continued faithful to their maker, as they were in reason, justice, and gratitude bound to do, the great and inestimable favours they had received in their creation, would have been transmitted to their posterity. In this supposition we neither should have darkness in our understanding, weakness or corruption in our will; but, on the contrary, a clear and distinct knowledge of what is right and good, with the greatest vigour and facility to do and prosecute the same. Then we should be entire strangers to the law which reigns within us, and is continually warring with the law of reason, as St. Paul declares; that is, the law of concupiscence, or those violent passions which are born with us, and are continually hurrying us on to the perpetration of evil, with such violence and impetuosity, as scarcely admit of any check or controul. Then we should be liable neither to death, nor sickness, nor infirmities, nor sufferings of any kind. But because they sinned by transgressing the divine command, they forfeited the great blessings they received in their creation for themselves and their posterity for ever. Because they sinned we are all born in sin—because they sinned we are all come into the world full of darkness, weakness, misery and corruption.

It must be admitted, Christians, that this original sin which is common to all mankind, is washed away by baptism, in which we are made children of God, members of Christ, and heirs to the kingdom of Heaven. But although the sin be forgiven and effaced by baptism, the penalties remain, for this weighty and material reason,—that we always continue to be the descendants of a guilty parent, who had incurred the disgrace of God, and consequently must always continue subject to the consequences of his

his disgrace, even after being regenerated to new life by baptism, in Christ our Lord.

Can any thing, Christians, give us a clearer notion of the heinousness of sin in general, than the dreadful havock the first sin of man has made, and will ever make, in every succeeding generation, to the end of time? To this one sin are owing the temporal miseries of this life, and the eternal torments of the next. And how atrocious must that action have appeared in the sight of God, which deserved to be punished with the continual misery, the entire and eternal ruin of the greater part of mankind? From this consideration let us learn to look upon sin in general with the utmost abhorrence, as it is the only thing he punishes with the most inflexible severity—the only thing he holds in the utmost abhorrence, and the only thing that has already made mankind extremely unhappy in this world, and can make each of us in particular eternally unhappy in the world to come.

2d, We are not only born in sin, but likewise subject to sin so long as we live. For St. John declares, *we all offend in many things; and he that says he offendeth not, is a liar.* However, from these words of the Apostle we are not to understand that we are under an absolute necessity of doing unrighteous things. No: it is a point of faith, an undoubted principle of our holy religion, that we can always, with the grace of God, fulfill every material point of the law, and consequently avoid every material transgression. What the Apostle means is, that from the frailty of human nature, the many dangers and temptations that assail us daily on every side, we frequently become guilty of many slight or slender offences. From this the most righteous themselves are not exempt, inasmuch as the Holy Ghost assures us, that *the just man falls many times.* But is the misfortune confined to this, with regard to the bulk of mankind? No: quite the reverse; for how many are there even amongst ourselves that often, too often offend; I don't say in some slender and insignificant matters, but even in the essential obligations of religion? How many are there who make so little account of the most grievous sins, that they seem

seem to *swallow iniquity, like water*, as the Prophet expresses it? It is only a flying thought, they say, a single word, a moment's pleasure or amusement.—Granted: But it is a thought—a word—a moment's gratification that offends the Divine Majesty, and the Almighty God prohibits under the severest penalties, under pain of eternal damnation. On this principle the holy Fathers and Doctors of the Church assure us, it is never lawful to commit the least venial sin or transgression, though it were in our power thereby to save all mankind, and rescue the reprov'd from the torments they endure, and must ever endure, in the devouring flames of hell, as that could not be compassed but by offending the Almighty God. On the same principle they teach us that sin is the greatest evil in this world, because it is attended with eternal perdition of both soul and body. On the same principle, in fine, they maintain that sin, properly speaking, is the only evil in this world; as all other evils may be productive of good, by weaning us from the love of the world, and affording frequent opportunities of suffering with humble patience and holy resignation, which must greatly increase our merits in the eyes of the Lord, and consequently the rewards that are reserved for us in the life to come.

Seeing, therefore, Christians, that sin is in its own nature highly offensive to God, and extremely hurtful and detrimental to man, is it not justly stiled by the holy Fathers and Doctors of the Church, the greatest evil: nay, the only evil that can befall us? If so, in what light should it be considered by any one who squares, or means to square, his actions by the principles of religion? Were we governed by the spirit of God, we would readily forego the dearest advantages of this world, and even sacrifice our lives, rather than offend Almighty God, by transgressing his holy laws. For our Saviour says in the Gospel, *If any one love his father or mother, brothers or sisters, his lands or his possessions, even his very life, more than me, he is not worthy to be called my disciple.* But who is it that properly reflects upon these great principles of religion? Have we not been ourselves as deficient as any other in this respect?

respect? If we look back into our past lives, shall we be able to find or point out one single day free from sin; inasmuch as we may justly say with the Prophet, *Our iniquities, O Lord, exceed in number the very hairs of our heads.* And what must be the end of these our continual transgressions of the divine law? Hitherto the Almighty has been pleased in his infinite goodness, to spare and give us time to repent. Let us no longer abuse his mercies, lest he being provoked, at length put a stop to our iniquities, by wreaking all his vengeance on our guilty heads. Let us rather return speedily unto the Lord, by forsaking our wicked ways, bewailing our former sins and transgressions in the bitterness of our hearts, and putting on a firm and unshaken resolution never to commit one mortal sin for any consideration whatsoever. This is the first step towards a reconciliation with Almighty God; by this first step once made, we shall soon be able, with the assistance of the Almighty, to rise gradually higher and higher, to the practice of the great and sublime virtues our holy religion prescribes; which when practised and fulfilled, will infallibly entitle us one day to the joys and glory of the kingdom of Heaven. *Amen.*

PALM SUNDAY.

THIS day the Church celebrates the triumphal entry of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ into Jerusalem, after displaying for three years throughout all Judea the power and goodness of his God-head, in the most surprising miracles. No sooner did he appear before that city, which in a few days was to conspire his ruin, and subject him to an ignominious death, than the people assembled in crowds about him. To pay him honour and homage, some strip themselves of their garments, others tear away the boughs from the trees, and spread them along the streets that lead to the Temple, whilst the rest pierce the air with the

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the liveliest acclamations of joy, *Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is he who cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest!* O, Christians, how sublime and instructive is a scene of this nature! The Son of God appears, not in the vain trappings of human grandeur, but in the meekness of a lamb, seated on arrais, and shouts of joy burst forth from the hearts and lips of all that behold him.

On the approach of those happy days, when the same Christ—the same God that entered Jerusalem, is about to enter into your hearts at Easter, such should be your joys, your exultations. If, on the one hand, I charge you to avoid the crimes of the Jews in crucifying their Saviour, so would I recommend to your imitation their zeal and fervour, in stripping themselves of their garments; I mean your sins and worldly attachments, and sincerely exult at the news I announce to you, that you are to visit Christ Jesus in a few days in the most holy Sacrament of the Altar. Your desires, therefore, should be vehement, and your preparations proportioned to those desires; because 1st, The greatest blessings flow from a holy communion, and 2d, We will consider what dispositions are requisite to obtain those blessings.

What greater honour or advantage can any one pretend to than to receive Christ Jesus within his breast; as in Christ Jesus are centered the most valuable blessings, and these he abundantly imparts in proportion to the extent and capacity of the soul he thus visits. It is an article of our faith, the strongest and most beautiful pillar of our holy religion, that in the Eucharist we receive our blessed Lord and Redeemer Jesus Christ, his body, his blood, his soul, his divinity. This is grounded on the words of our Saviour in the institution of this holy Sacrament, the night before he suffered, saying, *This is my body. This is my blood.* Some there are who would have these words to imply no more than the figure of his body and blood. But upon what grounds? The very following words plainly shew they are to be understood in the natural sense alone; for our Saviour in saying *This is my body*, adds, *which shall be given for you: This is my blood which shall*

shall be shed for you. Now, if these words were to be understood in a figurative sense, it would follow, that it was only the figure of the body of Christ that suffered for us, and the figure of his blood that was shed for us; a construction that would reduce us all into our primeval state of corruption, under the dominion of original sin, and liable to eternal damnation; as nothing less than the real sufferings of Christ Jesus could have released us from sin, and reconciled us to his father; which real sufferings must have been wanting, had Christ Jesus suffered only in figure. *The bread that I will give you,* says Christ in the 6th chap. of St. John, *is my flesh, for the life of the world.* The Jews were offended at these words, because their understandings were darkened in consequence of their sins; yet instead of undeceiving them, which he could easily have done, and would certainly have done, if the words were not to be understood in the plain, natural sense, he confirms what he had said by a most solemn oath, *Verily, I say unto you,* observe what he says, *except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye shall not have life in you.* In the plain, natural sense were those words understood by all the doctors and fathers, from the earliest establishment of the Church; and these surely were good judges of the meaning of scripture, some of whom were instructed by the Apostles, and their immediate successors. Those fathers and doctors of antiquity, are continually telling us that in the Eucharist we receive the body and blood of Christ, not in figure, but in reality and substance, the very same body that was born of the Virgin Mary, and died on the cross for our redemption. The Greek and Latin Churches have always adored Christ Jesus in the most holy Eucharist, nor can it be imagined that all the faithful spread over the earth, would have paid Christ Jesus such homage in the Sacrament, were they not convinced by their pastors, from age to age, that Christ Jesus was really and substantially present in the Sacrament.

To those clear and convincing proofs drawn from the words of scripture, the belief of all antiquity and the adoration constantly paid to Jesus Christ in
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the sacrament by the universal church of God, what objection can be made? not one of weight or moment. The first objection is, that our Saviour said *do this in memory of me.* He said so; but this was a precept of love to his disciples to offer up to his Heavenly Father unto the end of the world, according to the prophecy of Malachy, the same sacrifice, under the appearance of bread and wine, which he then was preparing to offer in the tragical and bloody scene of his passion and death; and the church, ever faithful to his commands, has continued from those days, and will continue to do so to the end of the world. The second objection is taken from the 6th Chapter of St. John, where our Saviour says, *the flesh availeth nothing, the words which I speak are spirit and life.* But in what sense does our Saviour say these words? To correct the erroneous ideas of the Capharnaïtes, who imagined they were to eat the flesh of the son of man, in a gross and material manner; like the flesh, as St. Austin has it, that was sold publicly in the markets. In this sense indeed *the flesh availeth nothing*, because it is then considered as separated from the vivifying spirit of God: but the flesh united to this divine spirit, taken and received in a spiritual, real and substantial manner in the sacrament, availeth much, as the same holy Father observes; otherwise the word or the son of God would have never become flesh for the salvation of mankind. But how is it possible that what appears to all our senses (a third objection) to be bread, should not be really so?---By the omnipotent power of God. He that changed water into wine at Cana, that gave power to Moses to change the water of the Nile into blood, who created all things out of nothing; can it be denied I say, that this almighty, all powerful God, can transform bread into his flesh and wine into his blood? Now the question is, has he done so? The gospel assures us he has. All antiquity has constantly believed it; the Catholic writers assert it unanimously; the church has always declared it in her decisions. And shall you put in competition with this demonstrative

tive evidence, the testimony of your senses? How often have not your senses deceived you, in mistaking one thing for another? Enlightened by a noon-day sun, have you not mistaken one man for another in passing the streets? And shall these fallacious senses stand before the word of God? *Heaven and Earth shall pass away, but the word of God remaineth for ever.* The people that followed St. John on the banks of the Jordan, beheld at the baptism of Christ, the Holy Ghost descend in the form of a dove: thus we behold in the sacrament the form of bread: but still we are not to credit our senses in this, any more than the Jews were in that; but submit them by humble faith to the dominion of God's holy word; why? because Christ has said *this is my body; this is my blood.*

Almighty God in granting us his only son, has granted every thing great and good, and the most valuable blessings necessarily flow from a worthy communion. The power and the mercies of God, I know, are not confined to time or place; but it is a truth, that in the holy Eucharist he gives the liveliest expressions of his love for mankind. He treats us as he did Zachæus: he comes into our house and brings along with him peace and salvation. On entering he silently tells us, *He that eateth of my flesh and drinketh of my blood remaineth in me and I in him.* From such a union what happiness must flow! all divines agree, that in this sacrament Almighty God pours into the heart of man such abundant graces as would necessarily raise and certainly fix him in a state of sanctity and righteousness, did it not meet with insurmountable obstacles on his side. It is the peculiar effect of this sacrament to nourish the soul and impart all the strength and vigour it can admit of. Our Saviour having assured us that *my flesh is truly meat*, it follows, it must have the same effect on the soul, that material nourishment has on the body; namely, keeping it alive, and preserving it in full vigour and strength. Observe the effects of this divine food daily before your eyes. You observe lions changed into lambs, hard and flinty rocks into fons
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of Abraham: that is, inveterate sinners into good and righteous men; passions subdued, inveterate habits removed, the cold Christian made fervent and zealous.

These blessings should animate us with the most ardent desires; and yet we behold the most lamentable languor and a general want of these dispositions which I shall now briefly touch upon.

I do not at present mean to speak of those sublime dispositions of the Soul, which relate merely to pure devotion or perfection; nor of those long and deep reflections on our own unworthiness, that fervency of spirit, those eager desires of being united to Christ Jesus in his sacrament, that generosity which influences our offering unto God the day we receive, some little sacrifices by prayer, retirement, self-denial, or alms; because all pious souls are generally mindful of those points; and with great reason, because, according to the opinion of Divines, although the sacrament necessarily confers a certain portion of Grace on all those that receive it worthily, yet there are many valuable and additional favours which are never granted but to such as receive it with particular piety and fervour. What I chiefly rest upon now, is that disposition which is absolutely necessary for receiving the sacrament worthily, and consists in a certain purity of Soul, or in being free and exempt from all mortal sin. For this sacrament being, as Divines call it, a sacrament of the living, that is a sacrament which was not intended for giving or conferring, but for the increase and perfection of spiritual life; it follows, we ought not to receive it before we have received the grace of God. This obligation appears clear from the dignity of the sacrament, wherein is contained Christ Jesus our Lord, the redeemer of mankind, the God of all purity, justice and holiness. Whoever therefore proposes, and I hope you all propose, to receive your Lord and your God in this sacrament, in the holy season we are now entering upon, must first take care to cleanse and purify his soul from all mortal sin, in the tribunal of penance. Otherwise he unworthily and sacrilegiously receives the sacrament of the Lord, and is guilty of the highest abomination;

abomination; according to St. Paul, speaking of this holy sacrament, *He that eateth and drinketh unworthily thereof, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.* Justly it should be so, for what greater indignity could be offered unto a God than to introduce him into a heart polluted with sin? Or as the same Apostle argues, in his Epistle to the Hebrews. *If those who had transgressed the law of Moses were to die without mercy; how much more severely must they expect to be punished, who trample under foot the son of God, and count the blood of the covenant by which they were sanctified, a prophane thing.* If therefore there be any amongst you who refuses to renounce his evil ways and repent sincerely of all his sins, let him keep off---let him fly from the table of the Lord; for to partake of the celestial food which Christ Jesus hath prepared for us in the sacrament without the nuptial robe of innocence, were crowning all his iniquities, and confirming for ever his own damnation. *What communication can there be betwixt light and darkness, purity and uncleanness, godliness and iniquity?* None. *You cannot expect, they are the words of St. Paul, you cannot expect to drink the chalice of the Lord, and the cup of devils; you cannot be partakers of the table of the Lord, and of the table of devils.*

You must not however imagine, that because you are sinners you should lay aside all thoughts of receiving the sacrament of the Lord: I only say you are not to receive it in a state of sin, because that were a most horrid sacrilege, as I already observed; but you are to forsake your sins and by sincere repentance endeavour to qualify yourselves as much as human frailty can admit of, to draw near unto and sit down at the table of the Lord. Be pleased to observe there is here a double precept, the one of receiving the communion, the other of receiving it worthily and with due preparation; the first is implied in these words of Christ, *unless you eat the flesh of the son of man and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you.* The second is laid down by St. Paul in his 1st. Ep. to the Cor. xi. 28. *Let a man prove himself: and so let him*
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eat of that bread and drink of the chalice. This *proving* consists in purging the soul of its crimes by penance, which is the first and most essential step towards a holy communion; a holy communion opens the treasures of God's grace and special favours in this life, and God's grace here is a certain pledge of eternal happiness hereafter. *Amen.*

EASTER SUNDAY—RESURRECTION.

CHRIST JESUS the *Man of Sorrows*, and *Lamb*, whom we beheld a few days ago led to slaughter by his people, is this day risen triumphant and glorious. Cloathed with immortality, the illustrious King of Israel, the pride of the house of Juda, arises from the grave, after conquering death, and humbling all the powers of hell. There is not any one festival in the year which the Church of God commemorates with greater joy, or celebrates with greater solemnity, than the resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; because it is the greatest mystery of our holy religion, and forms the grounds of our faith. In the primitive Church, eight entire days were employed in solemnizing this festival, with the greatest marks of devotion and religion. In process of time the solemnity has been confined to the holy days of Easter. This festival has been called by the holy fathers the particular day of the Lord; the festival of festivals, and the solemnity of solemnities. And with a great deal of reason, since it is on this solemn day that Christ Jesus by resuming the life he had laid down on the cross, for the redemption of mankind, triumphed over all his enemies, subdued the empire of death, vanquished the powers of hell, and opened the gates of Heaven, to himself as man, and likewise to all those who faithfully observe and fulfill his holy laws. For, be pleased to observe, that the glory which the humanity of Christ enjoys in Heaven, was due to his merits upon earth. *It was necessary*
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Christ should suffer, St. Paul says, *and by that means enter the glory of God*. Besides, as Heaven was the purchase of the death of Christ, he could transfer it to whom he pleased, and this he has done by promising it to all those that fulfill his holy laws. The resurrection of our Lord is, therefore, the full accomplishment of religion, or the redemption of mankind. By the death of Christ mankind has been released from sin, and reconciled to the Almighty God; but by the resurrection Christ opens the way to the realms of light, which he purchased for us upon the cross.

When the Almighty God, Christians, had resolved in his infinite wisdom to deliver the Jews from their captivity in Egypt, he ordered that a lamb should be offered up in sacrifice in every family, and the door-posts and lintels of every house sprinkled with the blood of the lamb. In the night he sent forth his Angel, who destroyed and put to death the first born amongst the Egyptians, but spared and passed by the families whose door-posts were sprinkled with the blood of the lamb. Soon after this first miraculous delivery from death, followed the entire delivery of the Jews, from the slavery of Egypt, under the conduct and ministry of Moses.

In memory of this passage of the destroying Angel, and the departure of the Jews from Egypt, which was subsequent thereto, the great and solemn festival of the Pasch or Passover, was instituted; as appears from the very word which in the Hebrew language signifies departure. But this Pasch or Passover of the Jews, was only a type or figure of the great Pasch of the Christians, for St. Paul says, *Christ Jesus who is our Pasch, or Paschal Lamb, has been sacrificed*: And St. John in the Gospel, *Christ Jesus is the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world*. As the Jews were delivered from their slavery in Egypt, at the time of the institution of their Pasch, so was mankind delivered from the slavery of sin, at the time of the Christian Pasch, or the death and immolation of Christ upon the cross, according to St. Paul, who declares, that it was upon the cross that Christ Jesus blotted out and effaced with his blood the sentence of condemnation which

had been signed and pronounced by the Almighty God in Heaven, against the whole race of mankind, after the fall and prevarication of our first parents in Paradise.

This was enough, Christians, for the redemption of mankind; but it was not enough for the glory of Christ, and the manifestation of his divinity. For, as he had frequently declared, during his mortal life, that he was the Son of God, and God himself, and in proof thereof alledged, that he would rise the third day from the dead, it was necessary he should arise, as he had foretold, otherwise his promises would have remained unfulfilled; which must have shewn him not to be what he had declared, the Son of God, and the Redeemer of the world. This is the reason, why St. Paul says, that *if Christ had not risen from the dead, our religion is vain and groundless*. For if Christ Jesus had not risen from the dead, as he had promised, he must have been guilty of a falsehood and notorious imposition, which is entirely inconsistent with the truth and sanctity of a God; and consequently the whole system of religion, which he had established upon earth, must necessarily fall of itself to the ground. But if Christ be risen from the dead, he must be then the Son of God: for, it was necessary for the glory of Christ, and the manifestation of his divinity, he should rise the third day; and this is in reality what he has done. For, although his body had been put into a sepulchre, or subterraneous vault, and a huge stone rolled to the entrance thereof,—although a strong guard had been stationed around the sepulchre to guard it, and prevent the body from being taken away; yet early in the morning when Mary Magdalen and others went to the sepulchre, they found the stone rolled away, and entering the monument, beheld an Angel, in the shape of a young man, clothed in white, who said unto them, *Be not affrighted. Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen: he is not here.*

The same day that Christ Jesus appeared in his new life unto Mary Magdalen, he also appeared unto two of his disciples, and afterwards to his Apostles assembled; so that his resurrection could no longer be doubted,

doubted, and it was known and attested by numbers of undeniable witnesses. Let us then adore Christ Jesus in his resurrection, and rejoice in spirit to see our God and Redeemer in possession of the glory that was due to his sufferings and merits; and by his impassability and immortality for ever screened from all the attempts of his enemies—the malice of the Jews, or the fury of hell. Christ Jesus is now impassable; that is, no longer liable to sufferings, or pain, or death; *Christ died once, but is no more to die. Death is no more to have any power or dominion over him.*

Christ Jesus arose from the dead, not for his own glory alone, or the manifestation of his divinity, but for our instruction and improvement; to shew what we are to do, in order to partake of his glorious resurrection, or the eternal happiness he has promised us both in soul and body. *Christ was delivered for our sins,* says St. Paul, *and rose again for our justification*; not that the resurrection of Christ is the efficient cause of our justification, because we are justified or reconciled to the Almighty God, by the death of Christ upon the cross; but because the resurrection of Christ is the model we should propose unto ourselves, in order to attain to that justice and righteousness, which are requisite for the enjoyment of the eternal happiness that hath been purchased for us upon the cross. This is what St. Paul sets forth, when he says, *Since Christ is risen from the dead, so should we also walk in the newness of life*; that is, since Christ is risen from death to life, so should we also arise from the death of sin to the life of grace. This is what the Fathers and Doctors of the Church call a spiritual resurrection, or arising in spirit to God, which is the fruit we should all reap from the mystery of this day.

But what does this spiritual resurrection consist in? It consists in *purging out the old leaven of sin*, as St. Paul says, in his epistle to the Colossians; in which the Apostle alludes to the precept of the law, which forbids the Jews to keep any leaven in their houses during the Pasch, and leading a new life in God. *If you are risen with Christ, seek the things that are above, and not the things that are upon earth.* Now this spiritual re-



resurrection should have three essential characters, which are all discernible in the resurrection of Christ; namely, it should be true, manifest and lasting: 1st, It should be true; that is, as members of Christ arisen from the dead, we should arise from our sinful ways, and return unto the Lord, not in appearance only, but in truth and reality. 2d, It should be manifest; that is, it should appear by our actions and conduct, that we have forsaken all our former sinful ways, and are transformed into new men; for Christ was not content in arising from the dead, but was also pleased to shew and manifest his resurrection upon every occasion. 3d, It should be lasting; that is, after arising in spirit and returning sincerely to God, we should never more abandon his holy service; for Christ Jesus after arising from the dead, is no more to die, but enjoy for ever the new life he obtained. If we are risen in spirit in this manner, there is no doubt but we shall one day share in the resurrection of Christ Jesus, and partake both in body and soul, of all the glory he is already in possession of in the kingdom of Heaven.—
Amen.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

WE read in this day's Gospel, Christians, that our blessed Lord and redeemer Christ Jesus, some time after his resurrection, appeared in the midst of his disciples, (who had met together and kept themselves shut up for fear of the Jews,) and said unto them, *peace be unto you.* This was the gift Christ Jesus was pleased to make unto his disciples, in his first apparition. He would not bestow upon them either power or wealth, or the enjoyments of this world, but his holy peace he gave them, saying even a second time, *peace be unto you:* which was in reality the greatest blessing they could receive. For what is the world to a man that is not in peace with God? Can he enjoy the least comfort or satisfaction upon earth? Is not his whole



whole life one continued scene of uneasiness and misery? *Who is it that resists God, says Job, and has any peace within him?* I know that sinners put on, very often, a face of tranquillity; but could we draw the veil aside, and see into their hearts, there we should find a continual hell, from the stings of their conscience, the disturbance and agitation of their passions, and the lively apprehensions they continually live under, of meeting the just punishments they deserve, for their repeated sins and transgressions. The Holy Ghost declares, by the Prophet Isaiah, that *impious and ungodly men have no peace*, and by the Prophet Jeremiah, *they may talk of peace, but they never have it in their hearts*.

And indeed, Christians, how is it possible for any one to enjoy peace or tranquillity within him, who knows he is an enemy to Almighty God, and in consequence thereof exposed to fall every moment into the devouring flames of hell? Now this is precisely the situation of every sinner, from whence it follows, they can have no true peace of mind, nor enjoyment of heart. There are some sinners, you may say, who seem pretty easy, and undisturbed in their minds, in the very height of their iniquities. I confess such there may be. But what is that owing to? Nothing less than their having carried their iniquities to such a pitch, as to become insensible of the judgments of God. As in the common course of nature there is a certain lethargy, wherein the most painful incisions, or the very application of fire may not be felt; so there is in the spiritual ways of Heaven a certain hardness and insensibility, which people entertain little or no apprehensions about, or the terrible effects of divine justice, which such a situation constantly exposes them to. But this is no real calm, or if it be, it is a calm of worse consequence than the most violent storms; because it lulls us asleep in the very midst of dangers, and upon the very brink of destruction. If, therefore, you would avoid this misfortune, and obtain that peace which Christ Jesus bestowed upon his disciples, you must renounce your sinful ways, and return sincerely unto the Lord, by a true repentance, and a thorough reformation of life; for peace and tranquillity

lity are the necessary attendants upon virtue and justice, as appears from these words of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, *Take my yoke upon you, and you shall find rest unto your souls*; and St. Paul further assures us, *that the kingdom of God is justice, and peace, and joy, in the Holy Ghost*.

In confirmation hereof I shall only appeal to your own experience. What joy—what pleasure have you not felt within your own breasts, as often as you returned sincerely unto the Lord? The strong and lively hopes you entertained of having received the pardon of all your sins, and of being reconciled to Almighty God, filled your souls with inexpressible delight. Had these moments continued, what happiness could be equal to yours? But it is in your own power, Christians, to continue and persevere in this happy situation, by avoiding every thing that may deprive you of the friendship and favour of Almighty God, and hinder him from pouring forth his consolations into your souls.

If you do this, *the peace of God, which surpasses all conception*, as St. Paul says, *will certainly dwell in your hearts and your minds*. For we read in the Gospel of this day, that when Christ Jesus appeared amongst his disciples they were extremely glad. His presence dispelled in one single moment the grief they were in for his death, removed the apprehensions they were under, of his not being risen from the dead, and undoubtedly filled their souls with joy and delight. But, be pleased to observe, that this blessing was the effect of the presence of Christ Jesus. Thomas, who was then absent, had no share in it. If, therefore, you mean to partake of the inward joy and tranquillity which proceed from the spirit of God, Christ Jesus must be present unto your souls, by the influence and impression of his holy grace. The moment you give up or forfeit his holy grace, by transgressing his laws, you necessarily lose the presence of Christ, and consequently all the advantages that flow from it. In this situation you must be filled with doubts, anxiety, and apprehensions, as St. Thomas was, before he enjoyed the presence of Christ Jesus.

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The misfortune, however, of St. Thomas, arising from the absence of Christ Jesus, did not long continue; for shortly after he vouchsafed to appear to his Apostles, while Thomas was with them, which removed all his uneasiness, and made him partaker of the blessings and spiritual joys the other Apostles had already enjoyed. This favour was the more to be valued, as Thomas had rendered himself extremely unworthy of it, by his obstinacy and incredulity. Although the other Apostles had assured him that Christ had appeared unto them, in his new life, yet he would not give any credit thereunto, but declared, on the contrary, he never would believe it, until he saw him with his eyes, as the scripture says, and felt the very wounds he had received. When our Saviour appeared after that, he desired Thomas to draw near, and put his fingers into his wounds, upon which Thomas cried out, *My Lord! and my God!* At the same time our Saviour thought proper to make him a public reproach, for his obstinacy and incredulity, saying, *Because thou hast seen, Thomas, thou hast believed; happy are those that believe and do not see; be not incredulous, but faithful.*

Here it may be asked, if St. Thomas had any merit in acknowledging Christ Jesus risen from the dead, after seeing him with his eyes, and touching him with his hands, *since faith, according to St. Paul, is the belief of things that are invisible?* In answer to this question, the holy Fathers say, that St. Thomas did merit in reality by the confession he made of Christ Jesus. For although he saw him in the flesh, yet it was not his humanity alone that he acknowledged, but his divinity also, in proclaiming Christ not only his Lord, but his God. It is, however, plain, that St. Thomas had not that humble and simple faith Christ recommends, saying, *Happy are those that believe and see not.* This is the faith that should animate us all at this period. Let us, therefore, believe and confess that Christ Jesus is truly risen from the dead, and in possession of immortal life. Let us likewise apply ourselves to lead a new life with Christ Jesus risen from the dead, by dying to sin and living to God alone. If we do, we shall be one day partakers of the resurrection of Christ, and of the

eternal peace he has promised his disciples in the kingdom of Heaven. *Amen.*

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

THE whole scope of the Gospel this day, is no other than to shew that Christ Jesus was truly the redeemer of mankind, inasmuch as he laid down his life for their salvation. *I am the good shepherd*, our Saviour says, *and the good shepherd giveth his life for his flock*; whereas all others only consult their own interests, and are very far from sacrificing themselves for the good and benefit of their flock. By these words our Saviour meant a silent reproach to the Pharisees, who looked upon themselves, as the head directors and pastors of the people; but were by no means deserving of that title, inasmuch as they had not the dispositions that were requisite for that purpose — a willingness and readiness to lay down their very lives for the good of the flock. But Christ Jesus had these dispositions in reality, as appears from his conduct and actions, in laying down his life for the good of mankind, it follows plainly that he was the good shepherd or pastor, and should have been acknowledged as such. The hireling or mercenary pastor, our Saviour says, is always careless, always negligent, always heedless of the necessities of the flock. The moment he sees danger approaching, he abandons the flock, and flies for his own safety, and by flying in the time of danger, gives up his flock a prey to the voracious enemy: *But I am the good shepherd, and I know my sheep*; that is, I examine them carefully, watch over them constantly, provide them with every thing that is necessary, and guard them against any danger they may be threatened with, even at the expence of my own life.

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I am the good shepherd, and I know my sheep and my sheep know me. Here is a certain rule for distinguishing all those that are truly of the flock of Christ; viz. acknowledging their pastor and obeying his voice, for *my sheep know me*, Christ says, *and obey my voice*. If therefore any one should refuse acknowledging their lawful Pastors, or obeying their voice, it is plain they cannot be deemed a part of the flock of Christ. For as all lawful Pastors are established by Christ Jesus, for feeding his flock, that is instructing, directing and governing the faithful in matters relating to salvation; to resist them, or not obey their directions, is manifestly resisting or not obeying the institutions of Christ. Christ Jesus might indeed, if he had thought proper, have made all the faithful equal in power and authority; and have directed them by the immediate influence of his holy spirit in the ways of Heaven, to the end of time. But he has been pleased to dispose and ordain things in a different manner: *for some he has appointed Apostles*, as St. Paul says, *and some prophets: others he has made doctors, and others pastors*. Seeing therefore, that Christ Jesus has been pleased to appoint pastors in his Church; or men, whose business it is to instruct, direct, govern, in a word, to feed his flock; it follows that those pastors should be acknowledged and obeyed by all those that are subordinate to their care and direction. This subordination and submission of the flock to their lawful pastors, is so essential an obligation, as to hold good, even when the pastors themselves may be reproachable in their conduct: according to that observation of our blessed Saviour, *the scribes and pharisees have sat in the chair of Moses; do ye therefore as they say, and not as they do*; the reason is, because the immorality of any man, neither can, nor should prejudice the institution of Christ. Although a pastor were reproachable, he is indeed accountable to God, and also to his superiors; but accountable as he is, he is yet the minister of Christ, and the pastor of a certain portion of the flock. In this character they have a right to be acknowledged and obeyed, when they prescribe nothing, but what is conformable to the laws of God: for our Saviour, in talking of the pastors

of the Church, says, *he that despiseth you, despiseth me.* Yet should any pastor or any superior command any thing unlawful, we are not obliged to obey; but on the contrary, to resist and disobey: for, *all power, the Apostle says, is granted for edification, and not for destruction.*

But whom are we to understand, Christians, by the name of pastors? 1st. We are chiefly and principally to understand the head of the Church who is the supreme and universal head or pastor of the flock of Christ; as appears from these words of Christ Jesus in the Gospel, *Peter feed my lambs,* in general; and again, *feed my sheep,* meaning the pastors themselves. 2d. We are to understand by pastors of the flock of Christ, in a particular manner, the Bishops; because they have been particularly instituted, to govern and feed the flock of Christ; as appears from these words of St. Paul, *take heed unto yourselves, and the universal flock over which the Holy Ghost has placed you Bishops, to govern the church of God.* In the beginning of the Church, there were no other pastors than Bishops. When the faithful began greatly to increase and multiply, then the care and superintendence of part of the flock of Christ, was committed to Priests. It was likewise to the Bishops alone, as successors of the Apostles, that Christ Jesus promised infallibility; saying, *I will send you the comforter, who will teach you all truth:* and again, *Lo! I am with you until the end of the world.* This is the reason why Bishops alone have a right to pronounce upon points of doctrine, in councils that are held for ascertaining or clearing up any point of faith. Doctors and divines are employed in discussing and preparing the points, that are to be laid before the council; but the Bishops alone, as the infallible judges of the doctrine of Christ, have a right to decide.

We are not however to imagine, that every pastor or Bishop is an infallible judge of the doctrine of Christ. No: this infallibility in sound doctrine, which is the greater part of the pastoral care, is lodged in the body, or majority of the pastors or
Bishops,

Bishops, teaching and directing the flock, jointly with and under the direction of the head of the Church: that is, we are to understand, that Christ Jesus, who has promised to his Church the continual assistance and direction of his holy spirit, will never permit the greater number of the pastors or Bishops to teach unto the flock, any other than the true doctrine of Christ. One pastor or Bishop, nay, many pastors or Bishops may go astray, and run into error, as hath been frequently the case; but then the rest of the pastors never fail to rise up against the spreading error, and indicate by their writings the true doctrine of Christ. 3d. By the name of pastors, we are to understand the Priests, to whom the government of a part of the flock is committed by the Bishops. All others are no more than auxiliaries. They may from a spirit of zeal, or Christian charity, labour in the vineyard of the Lord, and, like the pastors, they are accountable in conscience for the flock.

I have other sheep, our Saviour says in the gospel of this day, that are not of this fold. Them also I must bring in, and they will hear my voice: and there shall be made one fold, and one shepherd. By these words our Saviour points out the vocation or conversion of the Gentiles, who have been brought into the fold or Church of Christ, by a pure effect of the mercy of God. They were not originally in this fold, because they were not the chosen people of God: this chosen people were the Jews, as being the posterity of Abraham, to whom the promises were made. But they have been brought into the fold, by being converted to the faith of Christ; so that, there is now no more than one fold and one pastor; that is, one Church, which contains all those that believe in Christ; the Greek and the Barbarian; the Jew and the Gentile: In like manner one pastor, that is Christ Jesus, who is the head and invisible pastor of all those that believe in him. How thankful should we be to the Almighty God, for having brought us into the fold of Christ? We were all out of the fold, as being descended from the Gentiles, to whom the
promises

promises were not made. Yet the Almighty God has brought us into the fold, in his infinite mercy, in preference to thousands of others, who still remain in the darkness of infidelity and error. Let us then make the proper use of this singular blessing, by remaining all our lives within the fold; and obeying constantly the voice of our heavenly pastor, that is, complying faithfully with the doctrine of Christ. If we do, we shall not only partake of his choicest blessings upon earth; but likewise share eternally in the glory and happiness of his heavenly kingdom.
Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

AFTER our blessed Lord and Redeemer Christ Jesus had risen from the dead, he remained forty days upon earth, conversing with his apostles, the scripture says, and informing them of all things relating to the kingdom of God, that is the establishment and government of his Church upon earth. During this period he took frequent opportunities of comforting his Disciples, and preparing their minds for his departure from them, and the uneasiness they must necessarily feel, from want of his divine presence, as he was shortly afterwards to ascend into Heaven and take possession of his kingdom in the bosom of his father. With this view, Christ says to his disciples, *a little while and you shall not see me*: meaning, my stay with you is to be but short. In a few days I shall quit you, and ascend unto my Father, from whom I came. But then do not imagine, that I mean to abandon you: No: *again a little while, and you shall see me*: after the short course of your mortal life is over, you shall see me in my kingdom, where you shall reign with me, for ever and ever. In the mean time, during your passage

page here below, *you shall lament and weep, but the world shall rejoice.*

Can any thing be more surprising, Christians, than this conduct of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ towards his own disciples, whom he had promised to bless for ever, with his own presence, in the kingdom of Heaven? They were his own disciples; that is, his favourites and friends, whom he had chosen out of the world, to put in possession of the kingdom of Heaven: And yet he assures them, that during their conversation upon earth, *they are to weep and lament.* The world, he says, *shall rejoice, but you shall be sorrowful.* From these words, the holy Fathers say, it plainly follows, that nothing can be more inconsistent with eternal happiness than the happiness of this world. For if it were not so, surely the Almighty God would not have failed to bestow a great share of this happiness upon his own disciples. It was in his power, Master as he was, and Lord of the whole creation, to bestow on his friends riches, power and pleasure. Yet he not only refused doing so, but declared unto them, as his disciples, *they must weep and lament.* Surely what the eternal wisdom of God was pleased to chuse for his own favourites, must be what is most valuable in the eyes of God; and should likewise be most valuable in the eyes of every Christian. The misfortune, however, is, that people generally fix their hearts in the happiness of this world, without ever thinking, or thinking as they ought, of the happiness of the world to come; the consequence of which must be, to rejoice in this world, as our Saviour says, and afterwards to be condemned to eternal misery and pain. For eternal happiness will be granted, as is promised, to those alone that love and serve God faithfully in this life. Now nothing can be more destructive of the love of God, than the love of the world. For St. John says, *if any one love this world, the love of God the Father is not in him;* as the love of God necessarily implies and requires that the Almighty rule over all our affections and desires, that we be always united unto him, and ready upon every occasion

occasion to sacrifice every interest and advantage, to the observation of his holy laws, which can never be the case where the love of this world prevails in our hearts. On the contrary, where the love of this world prevails, people are always ready to transgress the most material points of the law, for the interests of this world. And this is the reason why Christ Jesus has laid this world under the heaviest curses and maledictions, saying, *Woe be unto the world*: Not the material world, the Heavens, the Earth, the Seas, or any other part of the creation; but the moral—rather the immoral world, or in other words, all those that fix their hearts upon this world, or the riches, honours and pleasures of it, to the prejudice of that supreme love they necessarily owe unto the Almighty God.

What then is the very first thing a Christian should do, in order to attain to eternal happiness? He should and is bound in conscience under pain of eternal damnation, to disengage his heart, and keep it disengaged from the love of this world. *Do not love this world*, St. John says, *nor the things that are in this world*. If you do, you cannot love the Almighty God; and if you do not love the Almighty God, it is plain you constantly transgress the first and greatest precept of the law—*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength*; and if you constantly transgress the first and greatest precept of the law, it is likewise plain you can have no pretension to Heaven; but, on the contrary, must be for ever a victim to the devouring flames of Hell.

Moreover, what should induce us more powerfully to disengage our hearts from this world, is, that it was never intended as a place of happiness for man. No: In the principles of religion it is rather a place of exile—a vale of tears—a place of trial and sufferings—a passage to immortal life. It is, as it were, the stage, whereon every man is to act that part assigned to him by the Almighty God, in the different stations of life, and thereby entitle himself to the eternal rewards of the life to come. What then can be more unreasonable or more preposterous in any man, than to fix his heart on this world, and place his affection on things

things that can never make him happy, but on the contrary, lead directly to everlasting misery and pain? Yet we daily see numbers of Christians that are as anxious for, and have as great a tie in this world, as if it were to last for ever, or that they could for ever enjoy the riches and pleasures thereof. But a few moments will undeceive them. Death will soon strip them of all they ever amassed, and make them sensible, when too late, of the error they were guilty of, in preferring the perishable wealth of this world to the everlasting treasures of Heaven. Then will they comprehend, but with no advantage, the full meaning of these words of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, *What doth it avail a man to gain the whole world, and to lose his soul? Or what is it that can make the least amends or compensation for the loss of his soul?* Whoever loves this world, or suffers the love thereof to prevail in his heart, and over-rule his affections, must necessarily lose his soul, *because it is impossible*, our Saviour says, *to serve two masters, God and the world.*

If, therefore, Christians, you mean to prevent the great and irretrievable misfortune, that is, the loss of your own souls, you must disengage your hearts from the love of this world, and turn all your thoughts and affections upon the kingdom of Heaven. By this step it is certain you deprive yourselves of a great deal of the pleasures, of the comforts and advantages of the world; but this privation will lead you infallibly to eternal joys and everlasting happiness. *Now indeed you have sorrows*, our Saviour says to his disciples, in the Gospel of this day, *but I will see you again, in the kingdom of Heaven, and your hearts shall rejoice, and your joy no one shall take from you.* Is it not then vastly better to have sorrows in this life, with the disciples of Christ Jesus, for a very short time, and afterwards rejoice for ever with him in the kingdom of Heaven, than rejoice for a very short time in this world, and be afterwards condemned for ever in the everlasting flames of hell, to inexpressible misery and pain? Surely there is not the least room for doubt or hesitation in an alternative of this kind. But what is that sorrow which Providence has made the lot of all his true and faithful

ful disciples? 1st, It is the sorrow, compunction, and repentance—that sorrow which was familiar to David, *I watered my couch with my tears*; to Ezechias, *Recognitabo*, &c. 2d, It is the hardships that all good Christians must labour under, during their sorrowful pilgrimage here below. Let us, therefore, embrace that party which is attended with sorrow in this life, but must in the end necessarily deliver us from eternal misery, and put us in possession of everlasting happiness in the realms of light. *Amen.*

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

AS the time was drawing near, when our Saviour was to quit this material world, and ascend unto his father, he frequently entertained his disciples with his design; and even frequently put it in their way to to ask him questions relating thereto, of which we have a remarkable instance in the Gospel of this day; where our Saviour says, *I am going unto Him that sent me, and none of you asks me whither do you go?* St. Peter and St. Thomas had already asked the question, as we read in the 13th and 14th chap. of St. John, but our Saviour would have them still ask him many more questions upon that head, in order to inform them fully of every thing concerning his departure from this world. But even now that they were encouraged thereto by our blessed Redeemer, they had not the courage to question him, so great was their grief and concern for being in a short time to be deprived of the presence of their heavenly master. This our Saviour was sensible of, for which reason he said unto them, *It is expedient for you that I go; for if I do not go, the Paraclet or Spirit Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go, I will send him unto you.* For in the decrees of the eternal wisdom of God it had been resolved the Holy Ghost should not be sent, or descend upon the Apostles, until after the ascension of Christ Jesus into Heaven. Therefore, it was necessary Christ Jesus should

should go unto his Father, in order to send the Paraclet or the Spirit of God, unto his Apostles. The promise Christ Jesus made his Apostles of sending them the Holy Ghost, must undoubtedly have been a great consolation unto them in their affliction, as it was the liveliest expression of the inexpressible love Christ Jesus bore them, and an undoubted pledge of the eternal happiness he had so often promised.

This Divine Spirit when he shall come, our Saviour says, shall convince the world of sin, of justice, and of judgment. Of sin—because the Jews were guilty of sin, in not believing the divinity of Christ. What could be more criminal—more sinful in the Jews, than openly to resist and shut their eyes wilfully to the light that shined for many years so refulgently amongst them, and not submit to the many strong and undeniable proofs Christ Jesus had given them, by his works and miracles, of his being the Son of God, and Redeemer of Mankind? Now, the Spirit of God, by inspiring the Apostles, and filling them with divine strength, to preach and establish the divinity of Christ all over the world, has convinced the world, in fact, of the sin those were guilty of, who rejected the Son of God, and made him suffer besides a most cruel and ignominious death. The Spirit of God has further convinced the world of sin in this sense, that it manifestly appears from that religion which has been established all over the world, under the direction and influence of the Spirit of God, that *we are all sinners, and stand in need*, as St. Paul says, *of the glory of God*; that is, his grace and his mercy.

2d, The Spirit of God has likewise convinced the world of justice; because, although the Jews fancied that no one could be justified but by the Law of Moses, yet he has made it appear, through the intervention of his Apostles, that Christ Jesus is the eternal justice and righteousness itself; consequently that there is no attaining to justice and righteousness, but by acknowledging his merits, and complying faithfully with his most just and righteous laws.

3d, The Spirit of God has convinced the world of judgment; because it appears plainly from the establishment

blishment of Christianity, that *all power was given unto Christ, both in Heaven and on Earth*, as he declares himself in the Gospel; and that he has already exerted this power, by judging and condemning the prince of this world, as we have it in the Gospel of this day; that is destroying and overturning the empire of Satan, and establishing the reign of truth, religion and godliness, on the ruins of error, idolatry, and corruption; besides that he is one day to come, as he hath promised, to judge both the living and the dead. The Spirit of God hath therefore convinced the world, not only of the judgment Christ Jesus has already passed upon Satan, the prince of this world, but likewise of the judgment he is to pass upon all mankind, as supreme judge of the living and the dead.

Consider then with yourselves, Christians, that you are all in your turns to undergo this judgment of Christ, not only on the last day, or in the general resurrection of the dead, but even the very moment you expire; for St. Paul says, *It is decreed every man shall die, and after this be judged*. But what judgment are we likely to meet with, at the great and dreadful tribunal of Christ? A judgment of mercy, or a judgment of severity? Shall we be judged worthy of mercy and eternal happiness, or doomed to eternal misery and pain? One thing is certain, we will all be judged according to our works, or the manner in which we lived on earth, and our fate determined for ever agreeable to the judgment that shall be passed on us, at that decisive moment of time. If this great principle of religion was always present unto our minds, undoubtedly it would prevent our doing any thing that may bring us under a heavy and intolerable judgment at the tribunal of Christ. *Memorare novissima tua.*

Before the descent of the Spirit, the Apostles themselves were ignorant, timid, and weak. *When the Spirit of truth shall come*, our Saviour says, *he shall teach you all truth*. It was this Divine Spirit that opened the minds of the Apostles, after coming down upon them; enlightened their understandings, gave them intelligence of the Scriptures, taught them, in a word, all truth, and endowed them with knowledge and courage
to

to publish and display to the world all things relating unto God. It is the same Divine Spirit that even now guides and directs the successors of the Apostles, the pastors of the Church, in every saving truth of religion, so as never to suffer them to mistake the true meaning of the Scriptures; never to approve of any point of doctrine contrary to the doctrine of Christ; nor any principles of morality, but what is agreeable to the rules and maxims of Christ. *Lo! I am with you, unto the end of the world*; not visibly in person, because he has left this world, and ascended unto his Father; but in his Divine Spirit, whom he left to his Church, to preside over it to the end of the world. Finally, it is the same Divine Spirit that now inwardly directs and instructs every one of the faithful in the execution of the laws of Christ. The children of God, St. Paul says, *are actuated by the Spirit of God. Diffusa est gratia*. And again the same Apostle says, *We know not how to pray, but the Spirit prayeth within us with ineffable or inexpressible sighs*. Therefore, every good work of ours, every step we advance towards Heaven, proceeds from the Spirit of God. For it is not possible to do any good without having the previous thought and desire of doing it. Now, these thoughts and desires proceed from the inspirations of the Holy Ghost. It is the Spirit of God that enlightens our understanding, and inspires us with the thoughts of prayer, or performing any other exercise of religion, and at the same time excites our hearts to carry the pious thought or inspiration into execution. As often as we obey these inward suggestions or solicitations to good, we obey the Spirit of God; and as often as we resist them, we resist the Spirit of God. *You always resist the Holy Ghost*, St. Stephen said unto the Jews, when he reproached them for having put Christ Jesus to death, as we read in the Acts of the Apostles. And may not the same reproach be made in some manner to ourselves? How often have we resisted, and still continue to resist, the inward touches and inspirations of the Spirit of God? Is there any one that does not feel within himself many pious thoughts and desires? At least let us be more attentive and faithful for the
time

time to come, to the inward voice of the Spirit of God. He will teach us inwardly to fulfil the saving truths he has already revealed unto the Church of Christ; and thereby enable us to partake one day of the joys and glory of the kingdom of Heaven. *Amen.*

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER:

IN the Gospel of this day, we have the comfortable promise Christ Jesus made to his Disciples, that whatever they should ask his Father in his name, should be granted them. This promise of Christ Jesus is the ground work and foundation of prayer. For if we pray, it is because Christ Jesus hath promised our prayer shall be heard. If the promise had not been made, we might indeed pray, but could have no assurance of being heard; for asking barely a favour does not necessarily imply the favor must be granted. On the contrary, it follows, from the very nature of prayer or petition, that it may be granted or rejected, inasmuch as the execution depends entirely on the will of the person to whom the prayer is made. But if Christ Jesus hath promised our prayer shall be heard, there can be no room for doubt or hesitation, because he was God and the Son of God, and because what a God promises must necessarily be fulfilled; otherwise he were guilty of a falsehood and deception, which is entirely inconsistent with the very notion all mankind have of the Divinity.

Now that he hath promised is plain from the words of the Gospel this day—*If you ask my Father any thing in my name, he will give it you.* Here then we have, 1st, The express and solemn promise of Christ Jesus, that our prayers shall be heard: and 2d, The condition on which the promise is made, viz. praying in the name of Christ Jesus alone, *if you ask my Father any thing in my name.* For St. Paul observes, *It is through Christ Jesus alone that we have access unto his heavenly Father, as he is the only mediator of power and merit b. tween*
God.

God and man. All other intercession or application derives its merit from, and must terminate in, the intercession of Christ. Christ Jesus by praying for us unto his Father, while he lived upon earth, has merited and obtained that our prayers should be agreeable unto God, and after obtaining this, has signified it unto man, by the promise he hath made, that *whatever we should ask his Father in his name, should be granted us*; and this is the reason why the Church always terminates the prayers and orations of the public liturgy, or divine service, in the name and through the merits of Christ.

But what is it Christ Jesus hath promised should be granted us?—All the spiritual blessings that are necessary for our salvation. The forgiveness of our sins, the graces and assistances we stand in need of to fulfil his holy law, and persevere in justice and righteousness unto the end of our lives. For, be pleased to observe, there are on the side of man two great obstacles to salvation—his sins and his weakness. His sins, were they not forgiven, would for ever exclude him from the kingdom of Heaven; nor would his weakness suffer him to fulfil the law, which is a necessary title to the kingdom of Heaven. What Christ Jesus hath then promised, after obtaining it himself through his own merits, is the remission of our sins, and the graces whereby we are enabled to overcome our natural weakness, fulfil the law, and by fulfilling the law become entitled to the kingdom of Heaven. I have said, Christians, that Christ hath promised us the spiritual blessings that are necessary for salvation, because there are many spiritual blessings, such as the power of working miracles, the gift of tongues, the gift of prophecy or contemplation, which are not requisite for salvation, nor consequently implied in the promises of Christ. These are pure gratuitous gifts, he grants to whom and when he thinks proper, for the manifestation of his own glory; but has not promised them to the faithful in general, or to any one, as they are unnecessary for salvation.

2d, Christ Jesus hath promised us likewise such temporal blessings as may be necessary for us; and this appears

appears from one of the petitions of our Lord's prayer, *Give us this day our daily bread.* 3d, He has promised such temporal blessings as may be useful and conducive to our salvation, as in the case of persons often restored to health by the prayers of holy men, when their recovery was necessary to give them time to repent. From this it follows, that in consequence of the promise Christ hath made us, every one of the faithful has a right to call for, and expect from the bounty of God, through the merits of Christ, all the spiritual blessings he stands in need of, and likewise such temporal advantages as are necessary for the support of life, or may be conducive to his eternal happiness. As for any thing else, either wealth, prosperity, health or success in temporal affairs, they were never promised; nor have we any right to call for them, but with the restrictions and limitations I have mentioned. But the misfortune is, that people are vastly more anxious for the advantages of this world (that are not included in the promise, and which they never will receive, at least in consequence of prayer) than for the spiritual blessings that are promised absolutely, and without any condition or restriction; and which they would infallibly receive, did they call for them in the name, and through the merits of Christ Jesus, as we have it set forth in the Gospel of this day.

What then have we to do, Christians?—To pray fervently and frequently in the name and through the merits of Christ Jesus. For it is impossible for us to fulfil the law, which is a necessary condition for attaining to eternal happiness, but by the grace and assistance of God; nor can we receive the grace and assistance of God but by prayer. *Ask, and you shall receive,* our Saviour says, *seek and you shall find.* If we do not ask, we will not receive; if we do not seek, we shall not find. The Almighty God, it is most certain, could indeed relieve us in all our wants, without any prayer or application on our side, if he thought proper so to do—but he is pleased to act otherwise; and orders, that relief be called for before he grants it, in order to keep us in continual subjection to him,
and

and thereby manifest his supreme dominion over all his creatures. But how many are there that neglect complying with this wise and necessary disposition of Providence, who seldom pray, and never as they ought? How many are there that let whole and whole weeks pass, without making the least application to the Lord? Without laying their wants and necessities before him, and calling for his most powerful assistance? Too many indeed! Is it then surprising they should feel the whole weight of the corruption of human nature? That they should be slaves to their passions, and so weak as to yield to every temptation, and transgress the divine laws as often as the occasion offers? If they would but pray, and pray frequently and fervently, and pray in the name and through the merits of Christ Jesus, they certainly would receive such graces and assistance as would enable them to subdue their passions, resist every temptation, and fulfil the law in every material point. If they would but pray, they would obtain the grace to persevere in justice and righteousness to the very end of their lives, and by that means become partakers of all the joys and glory of the kingdom of Heaven. *Amen.*

SUNDAY WITHIN THE ASCENSION.

On the ASCENSION of our Lord JESUS CHRIST.

THE Church of God, Christians, in commemorating during this octave, the Ascension of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, proposes to our consideration what the Scripture relates of that mystery which is the end or completion of the life of Christ upon earth. Although our Saviour had frequently told his Disciples that his stay amongst them was to be but short,—that he would soon quit them and ascend unto his Father, yet he never informed them of the day or moment of his departure. **This they remained ignorant of until the very moment it happened, which**
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was forty days after his resurrection from the dead. In the Acts of the Apostles we read that Christ Jesus after shewing himself alive for forty days after his passion, unto his Disciples;—after acquainting them that their chief business should be, to attest his resurrection from the dead, over all Judea and Samaria, to the remotest parts of the earth; and after commanding them not to depart from Jerusalem, until they received the Holy Ghost, whom he had promised to send; we read, I say, in the 1st chap. of the Acts, that Christ Jesus after all these things, whilst he and his Apostles were assembled together on Mount Olivet, he was raised up to Heaven in their presence, the eyes of his Apostles being constantly fixed upon him as he ascended, until at length a cloud concealed him from their view.

On this occasion it is easy to conceive the joy and sorrow that alternately agitated the minds of the Apostles; joy for this sublime end of all the sufferings of their Lord on earth; and sorrow for their individual loss, in being deprived of the divine presence of their master. During the time that Christ Jesus lay in the Sepulchre, after expiring on the cross, they certainly must have felt the deepest affliction. Yet the very hopes they had of seeing him risen from the dead the third day, as he had foretold, must have been a great mitigation of their sorrow; and their hopes fulfilled in his resurrection, must have turned their sorrow into the liveliest joy. After a short privation they beheld him, and became once more blessed with his presence. Even on the third day Christ Jesus manifested himself to, and conversed with his Disciples, and continued conversing with them upon several occasions for forty days. But at his ascension his Apostles could have no hopes of ever seeing him again, until they were to join him in his heavenly kingdom, which must undoubtedly have filled their hearts with sorrow, anxiety, and anguish.

This is certainly the reason why they continued, as the sacred text informs us, in the same place, their eyes lifted up towards Heaven, and fixed upon the way our blessed Redeemer took to ascend unto his heavenly

heavenly Father. As their hearts and affections were centered in their Master, they would at least follow him in spirit, and contemplate with grief and delight the very track or vestige of his departure from this world. Here they remained entirely taken up with, or rather lost in the contemplation of, Christ Jesus ascending into Heaven, until they were interrupted by the apparition of two Angels, clothed in white, who said unto them, *Men of Galilee, why do you stand thus looking up to Heaven? That same Jesus who has been taken up to Heaven before your eyes, shall come again, that is, at the last day, as you have seen him going up to Heaven.*

From this admonition the Apostles conceived it was not their own private gratification they were to consider, so much as the great and important ministry they were charged with, viz. bearing witness to Christ, or attesting the resurrection and divinity of Christ Jesus all over Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest parts of the earth, as Christ Jesus had directed them a little before his ascension into Heaven. Wherefore they immediately departed from Mount Olivet, and returned to Jerusalem, where they continued in a large upper apartment with many other Disciples of the Lord, in prayer and retirement, until the coming of the Holy Ghost, which happened a few days after the ascension of Christ into Heaven.

This ascension of Christ Jesus into Heaven, is, 1st, The triumph of human nature, and 2d, The solid foundation of the hopes of mankind. 1st, It is the triumph of human nature, because it was by the ascension of Christ Jesus that human nature was put in possession of the glory of Heaven, in the person of Christ. For although the humanity of Christ enjoyed a high degree of happiness by being united to the divinity, yet that exaltation which was due to the merits of Christ, as appears from these words of St. Paul, *Christ hath humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; for which reason God hath exalted him:* This exaltation, I say, was not obtained but by the ascension of Christ into Heaven. It is in Heaven alone that the humanity of Christ was put in possession of the supreme power given

him by his Almighty Father, both in Heaven and on Earth.

Before the ascension of Christ, human nature never was admitted to a participation of the glory of Heaven. The most holy and righteous men that lived, since the beginning of the world, were all excluded from Heaven, and detained in prison, free from pain, but deprived of the sight of God. It was at the ascension of Christ, after being released from their confinement, that they entered the kingdom of Heaven; for St. Paul says, speaking of Christ Jesus in his Epistle to the Hebrews, chap. 4, *ascending on high, he led captivity captive*; that is, those that were detained in confinement since the beginning of the world. This ascension of Christ was clearly foretold to the Apostles; David also says in his 23d Psalm, *Lift up your gates ye Princes*, meaning the Angels or Princes of Heaven, *and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates, and the King of Glory shall enter in*. And again, in his 57th Psalm, *Be exalted above the Heavens, O God, and thy glory upon all the Earth*. The ascension of Christ is, therefore, most properly the triumph of human nature, because it was at the ascension that human nature, both in the person of Christ Jesus, and of the just that accompanied him in his ascension, was put in possession of the glory of Heaven.

Let us fancy ourselves, Christians, upon Mount Olivet, and contemplate in spirit the ascension of Christ Jesus, with the glorious troop that followed him into the kingdom of Heaven. What sentiments must arise in our hearts from a consideration of this kind? What strong and earnest desires should we not entertain of going along with them, and sharing in the glory and happiness they were then put in possession of? Were all the riches and empires upon Earth at our disposal, we certainly would bestow them to attain this great and happy end. To mount with Christ Jesus into Heaven and reign with him for ever in his heavenly kingdom, in the blessed society of his Angels and of his Saints, would certainly outweigh every other consideration, and make us look down with contempt on the trifling and insignificant advantages

advantages of this miserable and perishable world. But let us remember that we shall never ascend to Christ Jesus into Heaven, but by following his steps upon Earth. This blessing is promised to none, nor will it be granted to any, but such as live up to his maxims, and sincerely intend to fulfil his laws in this life.

The ascension of Christ Jesus into Heaven is not only the triumph of human nature, but likewise, 2d. The solid foundation of the hopes of mankind. For our Saviour said to his Disciples a little before his ascension, *It is expedient for you that I go; I am going to prepare a place for you, that where I am you also may be.* Therefore as Christ Jesus has, by his ascension, taken possession of his kingdom, all his Disciples have a right, according to his promise and declaration, to expect a place therein. *He is our head*, St. Paul observes, *and we are his members; and the members*, as he further observes, *have an undoubted right to be united to their head.* Besides, Christ Jesus by ascending to Heaven, not only has pointed the way to, and shewn us the places that are destined for us, but is ever since employing his intercession as man that we may attain to those places. For St. Paul says, *That Christ Jesus is always living at the right hand of his Father to intercede for us.* And St. John declares, *We have an advocate in Heaven, Christ Jesus*, who is continually pleading our cause with his Father; that is, appeasing his anger, averting the dreadful punishments due to our sins, and soliciting his Father's mercies in our favour. It is in the kingdom of Heaven, whither Christ Jesus ascended, that he is continually presenting to his Father the blood he had shed and the wounds he had received, for the redemption of mankind. And what impressions must an application of this nature have on the heart of God? We read in the Old Testament, that the Almighty complained aloud of the violence offered by Moses, who by his prayers and intercession forced and compelled him in some measure, to lay aside the thoughts he had of chastising his own people with the utmost severity, altho' they were highly guilty. Now if the intercession of Moses could be so effectual, so irresistible, what must that of Christ Jesus be, con-

dered as man in the kingdom of Heaven? Undoubtedly it must surpass all conception and imagination. Let us, therefore, go with confidence to the throne of grace, as St. Paul directs, because *we have a High Priest in Heaven, Jesus the Son of God*, who is continually offering up unto his Father the great sacrifice he offered upon the cross, for the redemption of mankind. Through his intercession and merits we certainly shall *receive mercy in seasonable aid*; that is, such graces as may enable us to ascend to Christ Jesus after this life, and dwell for ever with him in the delights and joys of the life to come. *Amen.*

For the Exhortation on the Feast of PENTECOST, or WHITSUNDAY, see the latter End of this Volume.

TRINITY SUNDAY.

THIS day, Christians, the Church commemorates and solemnizes a mystery which is undoubtedly the greatest mystery of our holy religion. The mystery of the most holy Trinity is an abridgement of all the mysteries of our faith; as all the mysteries of our faith relate unto one or other of the Divine Persons, the Father, the Son, or the Holy Ghost. This mystery of the Trinity is the very characteristic of the Christian religion; or that mystery which characterizes the Christian religion, and distinguishes it from all other religions upon earth. The Pagan acknowledges and adores many Gods, or more than one God; the Jew one only God without distinction of persons; but the Christian alone acknowledges and adores one only God in three distinct persons, and three persons in one only God. It is, therefore, the mystery of the Trinity that distinguishes chiefly and principally the Christian religion, from all others upon earth.

It is not only the belief, but the knowledge of this mystery, that is peculiar to the Christians alone. The Jews themselves were entirely unacquainted with it, although to them in particular, the Prophets had been sent from the beginning, by whom they were frequently

quently instructed in many sublime points of religion. They had, indeed, a notion of a Redeemer, by whose merits they should be saved, as he was frequently promised and foretold by the Prophets, and the belief of a Messiah was then necessary towards salvation. *There is no other name under Heaven whereby we must be saved.* But the mystery of the most holy Trinity was never revealed unto them, except to a few. The revelation of this mystery was reserved for the law of grace, and communicated unto mankind by Christ Jesus himself. For St. John, in the 5th chap. of his first epistle says, *There are three that give testimony in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one.* Here the Trinity of Persons and the unity of the divine nature, is set forth in the clearest terms; besides, when Christ Jesus commissioned his Apostles to preach the Gospel all over the world, he ordered them to *go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,* which words visibly imply the three persons of the most holy Trinity. Upon these concurrent passages of the New Testament, the Church of Christ grounds the belief of the most holy Trinity, and proposes it as a necessary means of salvation, insomuch that we cannot expect salvation without knowing and believing *explicitly* this mystery of the most holy Trinity.

There are several points of revelation which it is not necessary for all the faithful to know and believe explicitly in order to be saved. No: it is enough to believe points of this nature implicitly, or to believe in general all that God hath revealed unto his Church. There are other points which we must absolutely know and explicitly believe; namely, this mystery of the adorable Trinity, and the incarnation of God, the second person of this most holy Trinity, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, because they are the very foundation of religion and of salvation. For this reason, the knowledge of these mysteries is conveyed by the Church, almost in every practice and ceremony of religion. The very first lesson we are taught in our infancy, informs us of one God in three Persons, and three Persons in one God. When we are baptized it

is in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. In confirmation the same words are employed. The absolution is given in the tribunal of penance in the very same manner. The very blessing used by the faithful in the beginning of every religious action, is conceived in the same terms; why so? Because the explicit knowledge and belief of this mystery being absolutely necessary for salvation, the Church of God has employed every method to make the knowledge thereof as common and universal amongst the faithful as possible.

But how is it possible to conceive that there can be three persons in one only God, and one only God in three persons? It is not indeed possible to conceive it; because it is a mystery which surpasses by many degrees the comprehension of man. However as this mystery seems to carry more darkness with it than any other, even with respect to those that have all the docility of faith, and firmly believe whatever was revealed; the holy Fathers have taken some pains to illustrate and reconcile it in some measure to our thoughts. For this purpose, they say, that God the Father knowing his divine essence and perfections from eternity, and he having a clear and distinct idea thereof, must necessarily have produced an image of his perfections in his eternal mind. This image is the Son, or the Word, as St. John styles him, because he is the expression, the splendor, and the bright effulgence of the Divinity. The Father seeing the Word, or the expression and image of his divine perfections, must necessarily be inflamed with mutual love. From this mutual love proceeds the Holy Ghost.

The Son then is engendered by the Father alone; but the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son. From this manner of conceiving the Trinity, it plainly follows, agreeable to the doctrine of the Church, that these three persons must be coeval, co-equal, and co-eternal. * Coeval from all eternity, co-equal in all power and perfection, and co-eternal as existing to eternity, without the possibility of change or alteration. Without beginning, without ending, without limitation, these three Divine Persons is **ONE GOD,**

GOD, blessed for ever. These three adorable persons possessing the same divine nature and essence, it plainly follows they must all be concerned alike in every work of the Divinity; so that what the Father does, the Son and Holy Ghost must likewise do the same. Nevertheless as these divine persons stand in different relations, so different works may justly be attributed unto each. As the Father engendered the Son, so the works of power and creation are attributed to the Father. As the Son is the image or expression of the Father, so the works of wisdom and design are attributed to the Son; as the Holy Ghost proceeds from the mutual love of the Father and the Son, so the works of sanctification are attributed to the Holy Ghost, because our sanctification is visibly the effect of the love of God towards mankind.

Thus much the Fathers and Divines have thought proper to say concerning the most holy Trinity—a mystery that should be adored with the most profound Faith; Adoration; and Love. It is here the exercise of Faith becomes indispensably necessary and meritorious, in believing those revealed truths, which eyes do not see, nor can human understanding comprehend. The foundation or pillar on which this faith is grounded, is God himself, as he has been pleased to reveal those truths, and what he reveals must necessarily be true. *By faith the just man lives, and without faith it is impossible to please God. Happy are they who believe and do not see.* If, therefore, we believe what God has revealed, we must adore his infinite goodness in revealing it, and our hearts must be hard indeed if in contemplating this mystery of the glorious Trinity and its dispensations towards man, they be not inflamed with love. To believe then the mystery of the Trinity becomes our first duty, and to cherish this belief, because it is the hinge of the Christian religion. In the second place, to adore and worship the most holy Trinity within our breast, saying with the Church, *Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.* And lastly, to testify frequently our love and gratitude for all the blessings the most holy Trinity has been pleased to confer upon us—the

Father by creating us in his image and likeness; the Son by redeeming us with his blood, and the Holy Ghost by sanctifying us with his gifts. This is undoubtedly the very substance and purest spirit of religion; vastly more excellent, more perfect and meritorious in the eyes of God, than any other devotion you can think of. If you do this, you certainly will one day be admitted to see what now seems inconceivable, the divine Majesty of the most adorable Trinity, unveiled before your eyes in the celestial mansions of God. *Amen.*

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

WHAT does this great entertainment signify of which mention is made in the Gospel this day? The Holy Fathers say, it signifies the divine food which Christ Jesus hath prepared for the faithful in the blessed Eucharist: And the Church likewise understands it in this light, inasmuch as she hath chosen this parable for the Gospel of this day, which is sacred to the honour and memory of the institution of the blessed Eucharist. As Christ Jesus hath given mankind in general a very signal proof of the most unbounded love, in instituting that Sacrament, in which he is to remain amongst us, to comfort, assist, and even feed our souls with his own sacred flesh, unto the end of the world; so the Church has thought proper to honour and commemorate so great and inestimable a blessing by a particular festival;—that festival which the Church is now celebrating during this whole octave or eight days. What, therefore, the faithful should employ themselves in during this festival is honouring Christ Jesus in his holy Sacrament, and testifying their gratitude and love for the blessings that are derived from thence. It is in this Sacrament Christ Jesus hath in reality prepared an entertainment truly

truly grand;—grand in itself, as containing no less than the body and blood of Christ; grand, on account of the graces it imparts; when a God gives himself what blessings must he not bestow? grand, on account of the prodigious numbers that are called thereto: it is prepared for all the faithful in general: grand, in its duration, as it is to last to the end of the world.

*When the entertainment was ready the Master sent forth his servants, the Gospel says, to call those that had been invited to the banquet; but they excused themselves on various occasions or pretences; some from a necessity of looking after their lands; others of minding their cattle; and others of attending their wife and family. Is not this, Christians, visibly the case with the greater part of the faithful of our days? Christ Jesus is daily visiting them by the Ministers of his Church, and inviting them to the Heavenly Banquet he has prepared for them in the holy Eucharist. But how far do they comply with his kind and generous invitations? Do they willingly and readily accept thereof? Do they go when called, and sit down at the table of the Lord? No, Christians, quite the reverse. How many are there, to the eternal shame and disgrace of Christianity, who do not partake of the Celestial Banquet Christ Jesus hath prepared for them in his holy Sacrament, but once a year; and even then with the greatest reluctance and want of desire, and other necessary dispositions, merely because they are compelled thereunto under pain of incurring the heaviest censures of the Church, under pain of excommunication. Is this, Christians, complying with the views and invitations of Christ Jesus? Undoubtedly it is not. What then will the consequence be? We read it plainly in the Gospel of this day. When the Master was told by his servants, that those that had been invited refused to come, he said unto them with anger, *behold I tell you, not one of those that had been called, shall ever taste of my supper; that is, shall ever share in my favours; nor consequently partake of the joys and glory of the kingdom of Heaven. Sad lot, indeed, for those who unhappily continue deaf to the invitations of Christ Jesus!**

O! Christians! had we a true spirit of faith, or were we governed by the spirit of God, we should think it the greatest happiness in the world to be admitted frequently to the table of the Lord, and do all that lies in our power to procure ourselves that great and inestimable blessing; for it cannot be doubted, but the participation of the blessed Eucharist is attended with the most valuable favours we can either expect or receive; as we then receive the author of all grace within us, what graces have we not a right to expect at his hands? When Christ Jesus condescends to come and dwell in our hearts, must not the greatest blessings come along with him? *He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood*, our Saviour says, in the 6th ch. of St. John, *hath life everlasting; and I will raise him up at the last day.* From which words it plainly follows, that the participation of the body and blood of Christ in this Sacrament, is a pledge or earnest of eternal happiness.

Seeing, therefore, Christians, that the heavenly food or banquet which Christ Jesus hath prepared for us in this Sacrament, is productive of the greatest advantages to our souls; how comes it to pass that the greater part of the Christians of our days are so backward in going to this Heavenly Banquet, and partaking of the blessings attendant upon it? Should some great and mighty Prince invite the meanest of his subjects to come and sit at his table, and at the same time give the strongest assurances of his love and protection, how readily would they all embrace the generous offer? But here our Lord and Redeemer Christ Jesus is daily inviting the faithful to come and partake of the blessings he hath promised and prepared for them in his Sacrament, and his bountiful invitations are daily rejected and daily overlooked! What can this, Christians, be owing to? Undoubtedly to our want of faith, or our having no relish for the things of God, to the love of the world, which prevails so strongly in the breasts of the greater part, as to extinguish entirely the love of God, and leave no taste or desire for the things of God.

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How is it possible, you will say, for people that are engaged, and deeply engaged in the world, to pretend to go frequently to the table of the Lord? How was it possible for the primitive Christians so to do? They were as deeply engaged in the world as any of the Christians of our days. They had their business, their families, and employments; yet they took care to receive the Sacrament of the Lord every day of their lives. That day would have hung heavy on their minds in which they had not nourished their souls with the celestial food, which is distributed in the Sacrament of the Lord. Why so? Because they lived up to the principles of their faith, and were convinced that the blessings derived from the Sacrament were of vastly greater consequence than all the perishable riches of this world. Were we governed by the same principles, we should certainly act in the same manner; but as we act in a quite different manner, it is plain our principles must likewise be of a quite different nature. But does it not require an extraordinary degree of sanctity to approach frequently to the table of the Lord? It requires an exemption from all considerable sin, and that from the dignity of this Sacrament, which contains the Author of all purity, sanctity and holiness. Without this essential degree of sanctity, going frequently to the table of the Lord, instead of being beneficial, would certainly prove extremely destructive to our souls. It requires, likewise, a true and sincere resolution of improving in virtue, and attaining to that degree of Christian perfection, which is consistent with our respective stations in the world. For it is not enough, not to prophane or abuse the Sacrament of the Lord, we must likewise honour and respect it. Now this honour and respect chiefly consist in retrenching not only every considerable sin, but likewise in retrenching, or at least endeavouring to retrench every smaller transgression, as even this must necessarily be disagreeable unto Christ Jesus. It is not, therefore necessary, Christians, that we be perfect, in order to approach to the table of the Lord. No: If this were the case, we should never partake of that divine food, for we never are, nor ever will be perfect:

fect; and never to partake of that divine food is evidently contrary to the intentions of Christ Jesus, and the commands of the Church, as well as the practice of the Saints in every age, who all made it a constant rule to partake frequently of that divine bread, *which, St. John says, came down from Heaven*. All that is necessary is, that we aim at, and labour for, a certain degree of perfection; for we read in the Gospel this day, that *the poor and the feeble, the blind and the lame, were invited to the entertainment*, which words the holy Fathers expound of those that are yet weak and feeble in the ways of God. In the beginning, Christians, you may be weak, infirm, and imperfect; but the frequent use of the Sacrament of the Lord will soon strengthen you to such a pitch, as to make you conquer your passions, triumph with ease over all the obstacles of salvation, and fulfil all your obligations, in which true virtue and perfection consist.

What then should we resolve upon, Christians? To go frequently to the table of the Lord with all the care and preparation we are capable of. Remember that the last consolation the Church administers unto the faithful, at their dying hour, is the participation of this heavenly banquet. With what fear, apprehension, diffidence and terror, or rather with what secret desperation, will those receive the body and blood of Christ at that dreadful period, who seldom or never received it during the course of their lives? But on the contrary, with what joy, confidence, and assurance, will all those receive it, who, during their lives, had frequently approached it? Then they certainly will perceive within themselves, that from this banquet they are to be called unto the enjoyment of another, of which the former was only an image—the joys and glory of the kingdom of Heaven. *Amen.*

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

NOTHING, Christians, can give us a clearer or better notion of the infinite goodness and boundless mercy of Christ Jesus, than what we have set forth in the Gospel of this day. As his intention in coming down from Heaven and assuming human nature, was to redeem the world from sin, he took every opportunity of conversing with sinners, even the greatest sinners, such as publicans and tax-gatherers, in order to reclaim them from their sinful ways, and bring them over to the ways of eternal happiness, true justice and righteousness. This condescension of Christ Jesus, which was worthy the bounty and goodness of a God, could not escape the censure of the proud, austere, hypocritical Pharisees; who, knowing that Christ Jesus was looked upon as a man full of the Spirit of God, and as a great Prophet, were highly offended at his conversing and mixing publicly with sinners, without reflecting that it is the greatest sinners who stand most in need of the mercies of God, according to the words of Christ in the Gospel, *It is not those that are sound and heal that require the care and skill of a physician, but the feeble, the disordered and the sick.* And elsewhere he tells us, *he was particularly sent unto the sheep that had gone astray out of the House of Israel.*

Hence we may learn the injustice and iniquity of the judgments of men. The most virtuous actions are commonly traduced by them, and represented in the most injurious light. The effects of the purest charity and zeal generally pass in their eyes for the effects of interest or passion. Whatsoever mostly draws the attention and applause of Heaven, is no more to them than an object of censure and reproach. Nothing could be more zealous, more charitable, more merciful, than Christ Jesus conversing with sinners, in order to convert them, yet this proved the very occasion of pharisaic reprehension. Are there not many amongst us of this pharisaic turn of mind, who are all indulgence
to

to themselves, and all severity to others? The moment they see even the appearance of a fault in their neighbour, their false and fiery zeal is inflamed to the highest pitch, so as to break out frequently into bitter invective, malignant insinuation, obloquy and censure. They readily discern the least mote in their neighbour's eye, but cannot discern the beam, so very remarkable in their own. Let these hypocrites, as Christ Jesus directs, first remove the beam out of their own eye, before they undertake to withdraw the mote from that of their neighbour. How then is a man to act upon occasions of this kind? Guardedly, respecting the judgment he passes upon the actions of other men. As often as an action can admit of a good construction, it is justice and charity to understand it in that light; and to do otherwise argues manifestly prejudice, injustice, or the want of charity. As for the censure of others, we should be always ready to despise it; provided we do nothing contrary to the law of God, worthy the censure of rational and virtuous men. *What is it to me*, St. Paul says, *what you, or any body else may think me? It is not by you I am to be judged, but by the living God.*

The vain opinion of the world is, nevertheless, Christians, the general pursuit of the greater part of mankind. Their object is not what pleases God, but man. The anger of God they do not fear, but the displeasure of man they dread. To please mankind, they make no difficulty to offend the Almighty Ruler of Men: to procure or preserve the friendship of the world, they will not hesitate to forfeit the favour and esteem of Heaven. But what says Christ Jesus? *Do not fear those that kill the body, but cannot touch the soul; but fear him who can destroy both body and soul.* People must go, they say, according to the world; and one is, certainly, despised or censured that does not act like the rest of mankind. But is it the laws of the world we are to be judged by, or the laws of Christ? What will the approbation of man avail at the tribunal of God? When the Almighty God will reproach you for having violated and transgressed his holy laws, of what service will it be to you to say, that you only acted

acted according to the laws and maxims of the world? Will not the Almighty God then ask you, if it was the laws of the world you was to obey, or his divine commands? If, therefore, to comply with the world, and gain the esteem and good will of the world, you refuse to comply with the laws of God, the Almighty God will certainly say unto you, at the Last Day, as Christ Jesus hath said in the Gospel, *He that is ashamed to confess me before Man, him will I be ashamed to confess before my Father who is in Heaven.*

If any of you, our Saviour says, had a hundred sheep, and lost one of them, would he not immediately quit the ninety-nine, and go in quest of that which had gone astray? And, after finding it, would he not put it upon his shoulders, and carry it home with joy? Even then would he not call his friends together, and say unto them, *Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost: I say unto you, that so there shall be joy in Heaven over one sinner that doth penance, more than over ninety-nine just, who stand not in need of penance.* From these words, would not one imagine the Almighty God had some particular interest in converting a sinner, and bringing him into the ways of eternal happiness? Nevertheless, he can have no other interest in it than of making his creatures eternally happy. For he is all-sufficient in himself, and enjoyed in himself, even before the world was created, the completest happiness. If, therefore, he takes any pains for us mortals, it is with no other view than to rescue us from eternal misery, and put us in possession of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Consider then, Christians, how much we are all indebted to the infinite goodness of God for the pains he has taken to make us eternally happy. We all have been like so many sheep that had gone astray. We are all astray, perhaps, as yet. To save us from perdition the Almighty God has sent his only Son down upon Earth, to take human nature upon him, and by his death to deliver us from sin, and the eternal punishments that are justly due to sin. Every day, perhaps every moment of our lives, he is inciting us, by the voice of his ministers, or by the inward solicitations of his holy grace, to forsake our errors and sinful ways, and re-
turn

turn to the obedience we owe unto his holy law. But how far has he succeeded in this generous design? Has he yet been able to bring us back from our sinful ways? Do we not daily resist his tender invitations to repentance? The Almighty God is continually seeking for us, and we are continually flying from his tender pursuits. Recollect, I beseech you, what the Royal Prophet says, *If to-day you shall hear the voice of the Lord, harden not your hearts.* For the consequence of resisting continually the voice and calls of Heaven must be, that the Almighty will no longer seek for, but abandon us to our own corruption, and in the end give us up a prey to the devouring flames of hell. *You shall seek me, and shall not find me,* saith the Lord in the day of his anger. The way to prevent this misfortune, is to return speedily and sincerely unto the Lord. If we do, we shall certainly cause an excessive joy in Heaven, and likewise become one day partakers of eternal happiness. *Amen.*

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ONE of the greatest dangers even the just are exposed to in this life, is a certain indolence, which banishes apprehension, and fills the mind with the false hopes of certain security. Then we are apt to let go the anchor of faith, slacken in our devotions, become less wary in our deportment, and insensibly lay aside the only safeguard of virtue—the practice of piety and good works. This deceitful indolence being, therefore, the fore-runner of our eternal ruin, it is of the last importance to root it up by Christian vigilance; that vigilance prescribed by Christ Jesus, *watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation*; that vigilance urged by St. Paul, *let him who thinks he standeth, beware lest he fall*; that vigilance, without which, from the infirmities of our nature, it will be impossible ever to attain life everlasting.

Surrounded

Surrounded as we are, by powerful enemies, both internal and external, who daily attack us and interrupt our progress to the kingdom of God, which we are justly entitled to by the merits of Christ, we are bound to take example by that wise prince mentioned by our Saviour in the Gospel, whose kingdom being threatened by a formidable enemy, musters up his forces, and puts himself in a posture of defence, to save his country from impending ruin. We should be more alarmed than that prince. His territories were only threatened: our souls are daily attacked, not only by the evils we inherit from nature, but by our mortal enemy the Prince of Darkness, who not only endeavours to rob us of the kingdom of Heaven, but even to subject us to all the punishments an angry God can inflict.

Of all the evils we inherit from nature, our weakness is the greatest. This is so great that if we sleep over the dangers that surround us, like the indolent and careless virgins—if we prove remiss or negligent of those dangers, we certainly will fall; fall frequently and at length run headlong to eternal ruin. This lamentable weakness has shewn itself in many who attained to eminence in sanctity and perfection. It has eclipsed the brightest stars of virtue, and tumbled the strongest pillars of religion. Holy David by one weak glance became a cruel murderer and an adulterer; Solomon with an understanding more enlightened than any among the children of Adam, had the weakness to offer incense to an idol; and Peter the prince of the Apostles to deny Christ. Do not those, as well as Tertullian and Origen, and many others, whose splendid rise and unhappy fall, equally remarkable in the annals of time, afford a melancholy proof of the weakness of our nature, and should at the same time rouse up our utmost vigilance? But do we not feel this weakness in ourselves? How often have we promised fidelity to our God? How often forgot those promises? A moment's pleasure, a sordid interest, a vain complaisance, a mere nothing, is sufficient to make us forget our duty to God, and all the precious interests of our immortal souls. Besides, we are all born with a
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strong tendency to vice, since the early transgression of our first parents; which, although it cannot influence the will so far, as to bring it under an absolute necessity of acting amiss, is nevertheless a prodigious inducement to sin, and the most effectual cause of our daily transgressions. This miserable condition of our nature made St. Paul groan in spirit, *I feel within me a law always acting in opposition to my reason, the law of sin*; a constant inclination to evil, which in spite of all the lights of reason and the assistance of religion, is hurrying me on perpetually to sin. This tyranny of concupiscence no man is free from. Mortification and a constant warfare with our passions may indeed subdue, but not root it up. The saints themselves felt and bemoaned it. But what must it be in those, who, far from checking, indulge and foment it by frequent crimes? Crimes that by their magnitude and repetition reduce us to the moral necessity of violating all the laws of God. Our vigilance, I say, becomes the more necessary, because our enemies are constantly, not at our doors, but in our very hearts, mixed and interwoven with our nature; and still we loll on as if we had nothing to apprehend. In the fond hopes of security we walk every moment in the shades of death. In greater danger than the man condemned to live in an old tottering ruin, or to a shattered vessel during a violent tempest; because life is not the loss to be deplored, but the immortal soul that must live for ever either in Heaven or Hell. There we are invited by the kindness of a merciful God; here we are likely to go by the indulgence of our unhappy nature; there Almighty God stretches out his hand to aid and assist us by his divine grace; but here we are seduced not only by the internal enemies we carry about us, but also by our external enemies, powerful and numerous.

Had we no other difficulty to struggle with but our weakness, no other enemies to contend with in our progress towards Heaven than our internal ones, this were a comfort; because time and pains may subdue both. But St. Paul tells you, *It is not against flesh and blood we are to wrestle; but against principalities and powers; against the rulers of the darkness of this world; against the*
evil

evil spirits who dwell in the air. These are they, whose force is equal to their malice, and their cunning superior to both; whom St. Peter represents as so many roaring lions, incessantly ranging the wide world, seeking whom they may devour. These are they, who laid violent hands on that miracle of patience, holy Job, that stripped him at once of his kingdom, of his wealth, of his family, of his possessions, of his friends, and made him sink on a dunghill with corruption and filth. The grace of God in him was superior to all their malice - to let it be in you. The same enemies you have to encounter, the same conflicts to sustain, but more dangerous, because more secret. Full of envy to see us labouring for, and aspiring to the thrones destined for themselves, they employ their fury and rage to defeat our designs. At one time they attack us with open force, by setting our passions all on fire. Another time they disguise their attacks under artful insinuations, that the transgression is of no consequence, only one of those frailties to which the just are daily subject; because they know that one transgression leads to a second, a second to a third, and so on until they fasten you in iniquity. Sometimes these spirits of darkness will transform themselves into angels of light, by inspiring sublime thoughts of uncommon and extraordinary devotion, in order to seduce you into shameful illusions. This is our situation, and these our enemies, so long as we live in the flesh, which made holy Job call *the life of man a continual warfare.* A war the more doubtful, as being carried on against potent invisible enemies; the more laborious, as every victory we gain is a conquest made by, and against ourselves; a war wherein we may conquer to-day, and be conquered to-morrow. Notwithstanding those dangers, we find to the great shame of Christianity, very many who, by ignorant or designing teachers, are lulled asleep and worked up into a false confidence, by far more fatal than the most violent hurricanes, that they will attain the haven of eternal happiness, where storms never blow, and where the cries of misery are never heard; but St. Paul although filled with the Spirit of
 God,

God, dare not say so, *although I am not conscious of any fault, yet in this I am not justified.* And he charges all Christians *to work their salvation with fear and trembling.* And they are the orders of Christ Jesus, *Watch*; for behold the Angels; they were driven headlong bound in fiery chains into the flaming gulph. We indeed should entertain through the merits of Christ a confident hope of eternal life, but a hope grounded on holy fear, a fear accompanied by vigilance.

The obligation of vigilance is of a two-fold nature; first, to resist and conquer the dangers that are inseparable from our respective states, and secondly, to guard against those dangers that are not connected with our duty. Christ warns you not to expose yourself to any danger, but what arises from your duty, *He that loveth danger shall perish therein.* Now it is loving the danger to seek it, or allow yourselves to be drawn into it, without necessity or reason, merely to gratify a vain curiosity, indulge a friend, or chyme with the reprov'd ways of the world. What follows? Perdition by their rashness; the loss of God's grace here and of their souls hereafter. For without God's grace you cannot escape the dangers that every where surround you; *without me you can do nothing*; and this grace he has not promised to presumptuous rashness. He grants it only for his own glory or the good of our souls. When men rush headlong into danger without any defence but their own weakness, dismal indeed are the effects that follow! you see those effects daily. Here, is the young libertine formed suddenly by an unhappy intercourse with those who never speak but to revile God, his holy religion, his ministers, or make virtue a laughing stock. There, the fallen female, who, by novel reading, stores her mind with fantastic ideas, and sets morality adrift. Here again, is that drunkard ruined and forelorn, abandoned by the very wretches who made him so, because he neglected that vigilance to avoid their company—to avoid that house where he always surely met those apostles of vice. Take warning by those examples. Look before you, look behind you. Be discreet, foresee danger, and avoid it. Almighty God will not preserve

serve the rash man or the sinner from burning amidst flames. It is not in your power to avoid all dangers, because some necessarily spring from the frame and constitution of our nature, the evil example of those we live with, the very shew and figure of the world, daily solicit us to sin. Almighty God permits this, not to bring about or be instrumental to our ruin, *for he tempts no man*, but as St. Chrysostom observes, to try our faith, to exercise our virtue and increase our merit. Seeing, therefore, that we must encounter danger, how are we to act? To submit through fear? No: To yield when attacked? No: But to encounter, to resist, to surmount. How? By the grace of God; *for Almighty God will not only not suffer you to be tempted beyond your strength, but will with the temptation produce in you an increase of strength, that you may be able to bear it.* St. Paul says so; and he further says, that Christ our blessed Lord was tempted in the desert, *for in that he himself hath suffered and was tempted, he is able to succour those who are tempted.* This should inspire us with the most undaunted courage to reflect that we fight under the banners of Christ Jesus. He is our general, our leader, our king. He leads, he combats for and with us, he supports us in the engagement, and if we prove faithful he will infallibly crown us with success. Notwithstanding this powerful succour, it is a melancholy but true reflection, that by far the greater part of mankind, even among Christians, make no resistance to temptation. They yield because they are tempted. Why not resist? Why not struggle and summon up your forces? Why not banish the dangerous idea, or the more dangerous image from your minds soon as perceived? Why did you not quit the place, the company, where your mortal enemy temptation lay lurking? Why not call on your Saviour like David, *hasten unto my aid, O Lord! fly unto my succour?* There are some temptations, it must be owned, too strong and violent to be overcome, but by a special grace from Heaven. Divines say this grace is never wanting. It is always either given or offered. Hence Christ Jesus desires you not only to *watch*, but also to *pray*. Watch to prevent the danger; pray
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when it is impending. But if you take none of those precautions, if you neither struggle with the danger, nor avoid the occasion, nor apply to God, is it surprising you should fall as often as you do? Your weakness is great, but the power of Christ Jesus is greater. Have recourse to this power. Fear not the attacks of the evil spirit. Since the sufferings and passion of Christ he is bound up in chains, St. Austin says, lest he should give too great a scope to his malice. He can indeed tempt, but he cannot overcome. Like a furious dog he can bark and rage: keep at a distance and you are safe. He cannot hurt you. *Be vigilant*, St. Peter desires you. If you are not, you will fall, from the corruption of your own hearts, which wilfully seeks the occasion of your ruin and dwells criminally therein. Hell is wide open before you every moment of your lives. One negligent step may ingulph you in all its horrors. *Be vigilant*. But as you must stand exposed to certain dangers, from the weakness of your nature, from the number and power of your enemies, from the troubles and difficulties of the world, put on the armour of faith, as St. Paul recommends; that is to say, you must bear up against them with constancy, with resolution, and with courage, so as never to suffer yourselves to be driven from the paths of virtue, or to violate the laws of your God. In this great conflict Almighty God will aid you here by his grace, and crown you in Heaven by his holy love, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

AS the Scribes and Pharisees observed a great deal of severity in their outward conduct, and a very strict adherence to the ceremonies of the law, the people in general entertained a very high opinion of their virtue, and looked upon them as men of great sanctity and godliness. But Christ Jesus who knew the hearts of men, took particular pains upon every occasion

occasion in unmasking the hypocrisy of those Scribes and Pharisees, and letting the world know what they really were—the vile counterfeits of true, sincere, and unaffected piety. As they courted the external and vain applause of mankind, in all their actions, they only studied to *appear* virtuous, and not to be so in fact; so that they always fell short of that true justice which has its principle in the heart, and manifests itself by a faithful observance of the law. Which true and unfeigned justice is absolutely necessary for the kingdom of Heaven.

For this reason our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ said unto the Jews, *unless your justice surpass that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall never enter the kingdom of Heaven.* As nothing but true justice, or the execution of the laws of God, can lead to eternal happiness, it is plain there was something wanting for that purpose more than the justice of the Pharisees, which consisted barely in externals and deceitful appearances. How many are there in the world whose virtue doth not surpass that of the Pharisees? How many content themselves with the bark of religion, without ever enquiring into the substance or spirit of the law? To be deemed honest and irreprehensible in the world is all they aim at, and even think this a solid foundation for eternal happiness. But is it possible for them to appear more honest and irreproachable than the Pharisees? Yet our Saviour declares the virtue of the Pharisees was not a sufficient title for the kingdom of Heaven. Whoever, then, aspires to the kingdom of God, must not be satisfied with a bare shew of religion. He must look into, and imbibe the spirit of true justice; that is, he must resolve within himself to fulfil not any one particular point of the law, but all the essential obligations of religion; not only in public, but also in private; not only in the eyes of men, but likewise in the sight of God; not with a view of gaining the esteem of men, but of pleasing the Almighty God, and thereby meet his eternal reward. This is the true justice that God requires at our hands, which is absolutely necessary for the kingdom of Heaven.

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You have heard, our Saviour says, that it was signified to them of old, thou shalt not kill; and he that killeth shall be guilty of the judgment. But I say unto you, that every one who is angry with his brother, shall be guilty of the judgment. By these words Christ Jesus plainly shews the difference between the Mosaic Law and the Christian Dispensation, and the great perfection of the one beyond the other. In the Old Law it was only forbidden to kill, but in the New Law, not only the outward action, but likewise the inward desire, or that anger from which the desire of killing proceeds, is likewise prohibited or forbidden, which argues manifestly a higher degree of virtue and perfection. As there are various kinds or degrees of anger, so there are various degrees of sin or guilt attendant thereon. When the anger is only slender or insignificant, then the sin is likewise so; but when the anger is so great as to hurry a man beyond his reason, and prompt him to wish or do unto his neighbour any considerable harm, then the sin is likewise great or considerable. This distinction of the different degrees of guilt attendant upon anger, is manifestly grounded on the different expressions of judgment, council, and hell fire, which Christ Jesus makes use of in the Gospel of this day. The judgment was a lower court or tribunal amongst the Jews, which took cognizance of slender faults or insignificant transgressions. Our Saviour, therefore, says, *If any one be angry with his brother, he shall be guilty of the judgment*; that is, he shall be guilty of a slight fault, a fault of the same kind with the slender transgressions which were tried and punished by the court or tribunal of judgment. The council was a high court of judicature amongst the Jews, composed of seventy-two persons, and residing at Jerusalem, which took cognizance of all matters of consequence. Therefore, our Saviour says, *If any one says Raca unto his brother*, which word Raca was an injurious and contemptuous expression amongst the Jews, *he shall be guilty of the council*; that is, a fault of consequence, and of the same kind with those that were tried and punished by the council or high court at Jerusalem. *But if any one shall say unto his brother, thou fool*, that is, from a spirit of great contempt, hatred, or revenge, *he shall be guilty,*
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our Saviour says, of *Hell-fire, or the Gehenna of fire*. This Gehenna was a valley near Jerusalem, sacred to the worship of the idol Moloch, where the blind votaries of this pretended divinity used to burn the children they had sacrificed unto the idol. As a perpetual fire was kept and entertained for this purpose, in the valley of Gehenna, our Saviour frequently makes use of that name to signify the eternal and devouring flames of Hell. It was necessary to explain this point, in order to make you understand these words, *the Gehenna of fire*, which frequently occur in the Gospel. But what we should take greater notice of is, the dreadful consequences that flow from any great or considerable anger, as Christ Jesus declares, it is to be punished with no less than hell-fire. Yet how many are there who make no account of this sin? How many are there who give a loose to their anger, even upon slight occasions; so as to make no difficulty in their passion, to load their neighbour with injurious invectives, reproaches the most false, or aspersions the most dishonourable? How many are there in their anger who thirst after their brother's blood, and even attempt his life? What can persons of this character expect at the tribunal of God's justice? *They shall be guilty of the Gehenna of fire*, our Saviour says; that is, they shall be condemned for ever to the devouring flames of Hell. I could not help it, one will say, I was in a passion. But your passion, Christians, is no excuse in the sight of God; nay, it is your very passion that makes you guilty in his eyes. You was in a passion—but you should not have been in a passion. The moment you felt your anger arising, you should have checked it, and stifled it within your breast. You should then have quitted the company or the occasion that inflamed your passion, and made it rise to the most extravagant, unbecoming, and uncharitable lengths. Our passions are never ungovernable; they may, indeed, be strong and high, but then the Almighty gives us grace in proportion to subdue them, and keep them within the bounds of reason and religion. If then with the assistance of divine grace we endeavour to curb and repress our anger, we certainly shall over-

come it, though the provocation be ever so great. But instead of curbing and repressing their anger, people generally indulge it, and even take a secret pleasure in exerting it, in its highest fury and rage.

Has not this been, Christians, the case with each of ourselves in particular? If so, let us humble ourselves in the presence of the Almighty God, and with compunction beg forgiveness for all the sins we have committed on this head. Let us, likewise, firmly resolve within ourselves, to be more guarded against our passions for the time to come. *Anger*, St. James says, *worketh not the justice of God*; and our Saviour says, *Blessed are the meek*. By the meek, we are not to understand those that are born with mildness; No: that mildness which is born with many, is a constitutional, not a Christian virtue. By the meek then we are to understand those that from a principle of virtue moderate their passions, and thereby live in peace with God and man. *Blessed then are the meek*, our Saviour says, *for they shall inherit the land*, or land of the living, in the good will and affection of all those they live and converse with in this world, and likewise the land of promise—them charming mansions—them delightful pastures of the living God, which is the inheritance the Almighty has promised us in the kingdom of Heaven. *Amen.*

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

FROM what we read in the Gospel of this day, we may easily learn, as well as from daily experience, that the infinite bounty of God doth not confine itself to relieving us in our spiritual wants and necessities; but likewise extends to the care and preservation of our lives and bodies. Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ was not content to instruct the multitude that followed him into the desert, and inform them of the ways of salvation; but was also graciously pleased to feed them miraculously in
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their distress, and when they were perishing for want. Being three days fasting, and at a great distance from any place where they might procure relief; it necessarily follows, they must have been weakened, in a very high degree; insomuch that it was to be feared, as Christ observes, they would perish in the way, were they suffered to depart without food. At this critical period, the ever-wakeful vigilance of Christ *our Lord took compassion of them*, the Gospel says; and by a miracle of extraordinary bounty and goodness; namely multiplying a few loaves and a few fishes, to such a degree, as was sufficient to feed the multitude with plenty, and likewise leave a great quantity remaining.

With what joy, Christians, must that multitude have received so seasonable, so necessary, but so unexpected a relief? with what gratitude must they have acknowledged a favor which preserved them visibly from death! How often must they have blessed the divine hand that was pleased to exert and display the infinite power of a God, for their assistance and support? Then they certainly experienced the full force of them remarkable words of Christ Jesus, *seek first the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be given unto you*. Having laid aside all care of the world for several days, in order to follow Christ Jesus, and partake of the heavenly food of his divine instructions; it is plain, they sought the kingdom of Heaven before all things—before the comforts, conveniencies or necessities of life,—before their pleasures, avocations, or even the pressing wants of human nature. Before all, their God and his word was their pursuit! wherefore Christ Jesus on his part, was not wanting to reward their generous and holy dispositions, by relieving and feeding them miraculously in the desert.

This act of Divine Providence is really wonderful in the highest degree. But how many acts of equal bounty and goodness, are we not daily witnesses to, without taking the least notice of them? Is it not in fact, a greater expression of the infinite goodness of God, to feed all mankind for a continued succession

of ages, than to relieve a certain number of men, in their distress, for a few hours? And is not this what the Almighty has done from the beginning of the world? Is not this what he daily does and will certainly do to the end of time? But because those lively expressions of the bounty of God are grown so common, they are not noticed, much less gratefully acknowledged by the greater part of mankind. We receive the continued favours of God, which fall thick around us, like drops in a shower, without ever reflecting on the hand that bestowed them; and enjoy the gifts, without so much as thinking on the great and holy One from whom they proceed.

I beg leave to ask, is this insensibility conformable to the spirit of Religion? Does it even correspond with the worldly maxims of gratitude and reason? A great share of the spirit of religion, consists in thanksgiving to God for his gifts; these of nature, as well as those of grace. This principle of thanksgiving, or gratitude, is clearly exemplified in the nine lepers, whom our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ had restored to their health, as is related in the Gospel; and after that, one of them went about, giving glory to God and publishing aloud, the favor he had received: Soon after our Saviour met him, and asked, *if nine had not been cured? What then became of the other eight? Or, was there no more than one single person found, and even he a Samaritan, to give glory unto God, and acknowledge so signal a favor?* Do not these words visibly imply a severe reproach to the men, that had received the favors of Heaven and took no pains to acknowledge them?

But how justly, Christians, could the like reproach be made unto ourselves? Do we not daily receive the most valuable blessings of Heaven, even in the gifts of nature—our daily food and support—without ever testifying our gratitude to God, for these continual and uninterrupted marks of his bounty and goodness? At least for the time to come, let us make it a point of Religion, in our morning and evening prayer, to recollect the gifts of God—them of grace
and

and nature, and offer up our thanks for them through Christ our Lord.

The misfortune with the greater part of Christians, doth not barely consist in overlooking the daily gifts of God, but likewise in abusing them by intemperance and excess. But what must men of this character expect at the tribunal of God? *Woe be unto you*, our Saviour says, *who are filled because you shall be hungry*: that is, because you shall be for ever deprived of the joys and glory of the kingdom of Heaven. And again St. Paul declares in the 5th Ch. of his Epistle to the Galatians, that *all those that pursue drunkenness, feastings and revellings, shall never obtain the kingdom of God*. As the Almighty God is essentially guided by infinite wisdom, in all his actions, it is plain he cannot intend the gifts of nature, but in a wise and rational light; for the support of life, and not for the gratification of the sensual appetites; for a rational and a moderate pleasure, not for criminal and intemperate enjoyment. But is it thus the gifts of nature which providence bestows upon us are employed? Are they never made use of, but to answer the purposes of reason, and in a manner conformable to the intentions of Divine Providence? Alas! Christians, how many are there who seek no other happiness than that of eating and drinking, and eating and drinking to excess? How many, that would readily give up and forfeit all pretensions to eternal happiness, could they but enjoy sensual pleasures without end? How many, in fine, *who make a God of their belly*, as St. Paul says, and by the excesses they run into, sink themselves below the level of the very beasts of the field. For even the beasts of the field, from an inward instinct, are content with what is sufficient for the support of nature, whereas thousands of men, endowed with reason and informed with the principles of Christianity, are daily seen to debase their bodies and minds by the most shameful and excessive intemperance.

Intemperance of any kind either in eating or drinking is a breach of the law; first, of the law of nature, or that inward law, which the light of

reason alone points out unto the mind; and 2d, of the positive law of Christ. The breach of either law by any considerable intemperance makes us guilty of a mortal sin. It is pretty rare indeed, that people commit any considerable excess in point of eating; although instances of the kind are not wanting, but in point of drinking it is too common. However they are both equally forbidden by the Law; for Christ Jesus says, in the 21st chap. of St. Luke, *Look well to yourselves, lest perhaps your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness; and that the day of the Lord on a sudden surprise you.* Be pleased to observe, our Saviour does not say, least your hearts be overcharged with drunkenness alone, but with surfeiting and drunkenness; which words plainly imply an excess of either kind. Now Christians, this law of temperance and sobriety, obliges us in every situation and circumstance of life. Nor is it ever lawful to transgress it for any consideration whatsoever; either out of friendship, complaisance, a view to interest, the laws of hospitality, or the mistaken honour of the world. And yet how many are there who think themselves excusable for running into excess, merely because they entertain their friends? or because they may be censured by the world for doing otherwise? But let them consider, it is not by the laws of the world they are to be judged, but by the laws of Christ. If therefore we transgress the laws of Christ in complaisance to the world, we certainly will be condemned at the tribunal of Christ, let the world think or say what they will.

What then have we to do, Christians?—To partake of the gifts of God as the multitude did in the desert, with sobriety and thanksgiving. With sobriety, by avoiding every excess: and with thanksgiving, by sanctifying our very food. For even these natural actions are susceptible, in the principles of religion, of a certain degree of sanctity and godliness. *Good*, St. Paul says (1st. Tim. chap. 4) *is sanctified by the word of God and prayer*: and again in the 10th chap. of his 1st epistle to the Corinthians. *Whether you eat*

eat or drink, or do any thing else, do all things for the glory of God. It is therefore, Christians, in our power to make even the actions of eating and drinking meritorious in the sight of God: 1st, by avoiding every excess from a principle of religion; 2d, by offering up those actions to God, in union with the merits of Christ; 3d, by performing them, not to gratify our palates, or any sensual inclination; but to preserve life and thereby enable us to serve and glorify the Lord, for a longer space of time upon earth: by practising upon every occasion of this kind, some act of self-denial; such as refusing ourselves something very pleasing to the taste, in compliance with these words of Christ, *if any one will come after me let him deny himself.* Blessed are those that hunger, our Saviour says; that is, those that deprive themselves of every unlawful pleasure; who live with sobriety and self-denial; *for they shall be filled,* by the inward consolations of the spirit of God in this life, and in the next by the pure and eternal joys of the kingdom of Heaven. Amen.

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

IT was not enough for our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ to inform us of the ways of Heaven; he was likewise pleased to point out, and to caution us against the many dangers we daily stand exposed to with regard to salvation. Now one of the greatest dangers in the world, is error; or the adoption of principles, or following rules, different from what Christ Jesus the eternal and unerring wisdom of God, hath laid down in the Gospel. Wherefore our Saviour says, *take heed of false prophets;* meaning the authors and abettors of false doctrines: *For although they come to you in the cloathing of sheep, they are inwardly ravenous wolves;* although they wear the face of innocence,

sanctity and godliness;---although they affect the purest and warmest zeal for the glory of God, and the good of souls; yet in the bottom they are no more than *rapacious wolves* that are bent upon our entire ruin and destruction.

Take heed therefore of false prophets. But how shall we distinguish those dangerous, pernicious and destructive monsters? *You shall know them, our Saviour says, by their works.* As there can be no true virtue or zeal, but what is built upon and conformable to the laws and maxims of Christ Jesus, it is plain that whoever deviates from those laws and maxims of Christ Jesus, can have no share of any true virtue or zeal. And this is visibly the case with all false prophets: for they never fail to rise up against the authority which Christ Jesus hath established upon earth, to instruct, govern and conduct the faithful in the ways of Heaven. They never fail likewise to teach new doctrines and prescribe new principles of action and conduct. They are always fond of walking in new and unbeaten tracks, of aiming at and practising uncommon and extraordinary things. From their works therefore, it is easy to know them, and consequently to avoid them, according to the directions of Christ Jesus.

But how is it possible, you will say, that people who are extremely honest, extremely charitable, extremely regular in their conduct should be in the wrong? If it were not possible, Christ Jesus would not have declared it to be so, saying, *they come unto you in the cloathing of sheep, but are inwardly ravenous wolves.* It even appears from the words of Christ, that it cannot be otherwise. For he says, *can any one gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles? A good tree cannot bring forth bad fruit, nor a bad tree, good fruit.* If therefore the tree be bad in itself, the fruit must likewise partake of the infected nature of the stock; whence it plainly follows, that no actions truly virtuous and good, can proceed from any man who follows wrong and erroneous principles.

The words of Christ Jesus not only serve to distinguish true from pretended virtue in others, but like-
wise

wife in ourselves. People are very fond of flattering themselves with the hopes of eternal happiness, because they are Christians and Catholics; because they avoid certain heinous sins and transgressions, which others may be guilty of; such as flagrant injustices, murder, blasphemy or oppression. But is this, Christians, a sufficient title to the kingdom of Heaven? Christ Jesus declares it is not. For he says, *Every tree that yieldeth not good fruit, shall be cut down and cast into the fire.* What are these good fruits which alone entitle us to the kingdom of Heaven? --Fulfilling the law of God, and practising the virtues prescribed by the law; justice, temperance, godliness, humility, self-denial and charity. Without these good works we can have no expectation of eternal happiness: For Heaven, Christians, is a reward which is never granted, but to such as deserve it. *It is a crown of justice*, St. Paul says, that is, a crown due to the works of justice and righteousness alone. If therefore, Christians, we have not these works of justice and righteousness to produce, it is plain we can have no pretensions to the crown of justice, which God reserves for the just and good in the kingdom of Heaven. And this is the reason why St. Peter says in the 1st chap. of his 2d Epist. *Take care to make good your vocation to the faith of Christ by your good works.* As if the apostle had said, you have been called it is true to the faith of Christ; you have been called likewise to the possession of the kingdom of Heaven, because it is the reward Christ Jesus hath promised to those that believe in him and fulfill his law. But then observe; you must make good your vocation by your good works; or, in order to obtain the reward, you must do the good works prescribed by the law. This is likewise the reason why St. James says, in his 2d chap. *What will it avail one to say, dear brethren, I have faith, or I profess the faith of Christ, if he has not the works of faith? Will his faith save him? undoubtedly it will not: for man is justified by works and not by faith alone.*

Are these the principles we have hitherto followed in our actions and conduct? Have we ever taken any

pains to convince ourselves of the necessity of bringing forth good fruit? Have we ever considered seriously with ourselves, that *every tree that yieldeth not good fruit, shall be cut down and cast into the fire*, the devouring and everlasting fire of Hell? *I have chosen you and appointed you*, our Saviour says to his disciples in the 15th chap. of St. John, *that you go, and bear fruit; and that your fruit remain*. Like the disciples of the Lord, we have been chosen and appointed by the Almighty God, to bring forth the precious and lasting fruit of justice and righteousness, as we have been called to the faith of Christ. But how far have we complied with this destination of the Almighty God? What good have we done since we attained to the years of discretion? Have we constantly performed the good works prescribed by the law? Alas! Christians, are not all our works, works of iniquity, works of darkness, works of interest and passion? At least works of the most criminal omission or negligence? What then will the consequence be, Christians? We read it plainly in the Gospel of this day; *Every tree that yieldeth not good fruit, shall be cut down and cast into the fire*, the devouring and everlasting fire of Hell. Let us therefore, Christians, humble ourselves in the presence of the Almighty God: let us look back with sorrow and compunction on our former neglect, and firmly resolve upon a thorough reformation of life for the time to come.

Notwithstanding the positive declarations, the many and repeated threats of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, a great many lull themselves into a kind of security, from the hopes of repentance. They are conscious, they own, of not fulfilling the law, and of not practising the virtues prescribed by the law; but still they hope, that upon applying to the Almighty God for forgiveness, they certainly will obtain mercy at his hands; that is, the remission of their sins, and an undoubted title to the kingdom of Heaven. But Christ Jesus declares the reverse in the Gospel of this day; wherein he says,

it is not every one that sayeth to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven; but he that doth the will of my Father; or, in other words, he that fulfills the law, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven. Can any thing be plainer than these words of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ? or more capable of undeceiving all those, that expect eternal happiness upon the strength of a 'Lord have mercy on me?' Christ Jesus declares that such as build upon this foundation, shall be disappointed and excluded for ever from the kingdom of Heaven.

But has not Christ Jesus promised forgiveness to repenting sinners? He has, Christians, but not to repentance that consists only in words: Not to repentance that is deferred from day to day, and very often to the last moment of one's life: Not to repentance that proceeds purely from the fear of Hell, and not from any real sorrow for having offended the Almighty God, who on account of his infinite greatness and perfections is supremely worthy the obedience and love of all rational and intellectual creatures. Now Christians, the repentance that people generally build upon, is of this kind. Has not Christ Jesus promised forgiveness to repenting sinners? He has: but at the same time he never promised them either the grace or leisure to repent. He has even declared the contrary in the Gospel; saying, *ye shall seek me, and ye shall not find me; and ye shall die in your sins.* What then have we to do, Christians? *To work our salvation, as St. Paul directs, with fear, and trembling. To apply seriously to fulfilling the law, and the whole law: that is, not only avoiding certain sins and transgressions, but every material breach of the law. Not only practising any one particular virtue, but all the essential virtues prescribed by the law. Nothing but our good works can secure our eternal happiness, Let us therefore do good while we have light, as our Saviour directs in the Gospel; for the night will come,---the dismal, dreary night of death; that dark and dreadful night, the night of eternal misery and pain,---in which no man can do good.* Let us not content ourselves with

with saying Lord, Lord; but rather fulfil the will of God, by keeping faithfully and constantly his commandments: for Christ Jesus declares, that whoever fulfils the law, shall be admitted to the participation of the joys and glory of the kingdom of Heaven. *Amen.*

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE parable mentioned in the Gospel of this day, of the rich man, who brought his steward to an account for wasting and dissipating his substance, shews us plainly, Christians, that Almighty God will bring every one to an account for the use he makes of those gifts and graces, which providence thinks proper to bestow upon him in this world. Now wealth being one of those gifts, which well used, powerfully helps us on in the ways of life; but abused (as it generally is) leads us blindfolded into the gloomy ways of eternal death; a due consideration of this subject demands our most serious attention.

Let a person be ever so rich or powerful, he is no more than the steward of the Almighty, and consequently accountable at the tribunal of God for his administration. At the last hour therefore, the Almighty will certainly address every rich man, in the words of the Gospel of this day—*Give an account of thy stewardship.* But what account? where is the man possessed of any considerable share of the wealth of this world, who does not think himself master of disposing of it, as he thinks proper? Is it not even rare to find a man, who does not dispose of it in fact, in a most iniquitous and criminal manner? either to gratify his vanity, his ambition, his sensual appetites or inordinate desires? Is it for this end the Almighty bestows wealth? undoubtedly it is not: for being infinitely wise and good, he must have some views
worthy

worthy that wisdom and goodness, in giving to some a considerable share of wealth, in preference to thousands of others, who are left in the greatest misery and want: that is, he must certainly intend the rich should use their riches in a manner conformable to the light of reason and the principles of Religion, for their own support, the support of their families, the education and establishment of their children, and finally for the relief of the necessitous and poor. To make use of riches in any other shape or for any other purpose, is plainly deviating from the views of God, and counteracting his wise and bountiful intentions, and of course rendering us extremely guilty in his eyes. On this account Christ Jesus calls riches, *the riches of iniquity*; not because they are bad in themselves; for if they were, the Almighty God would never have bestowed them, and besides, the patriarchs of the old law were rich and opulent, yet men of distinguished sanctity and holiness; but because people render themselves extremely criminal in his eyes, by the abuse of the riches that God has bestowed upon them.

It is uncommon indeed, that people deviate from the views of Providence so far, as not to employ their riches for their own support, the support of their families, or the establishment of their children; but it is too common that they overlook the material point of relieving the poor, although it be one of the most essential obligations of religion: an obligation enforced by a special command both in the old and new law; --in the old, the spirit of God says, in the 15th ch. of Deut. *Poor shall not be wanting in the land, therefore I command thee to open thy hand to thy needy and poor brother*: In the new, Christ Jesus says, in the 12th ch. of St. Luke, *give alms; provide yourselves with a treasure in Heaven that wasteth not; where no thief approacheth, nor moth consumeth*.

Now that this command is a most essential and indispensable obligation, appears from the sentence of eternal perdition which Jesus Christ is on the last day to pronounce, against all the reprov'd in general; wherein no mention is made of any other sin or transgression,

transgression, than the neglect of charity alone; *Go ye accursed, into eternal fire; for, I have been hungry and you gave me not to eat; thirsty, and you gave me not to drink; naked, and you have not clothed me; sick and in prison, and you have not visited me. Go therefore, ye accursed, into eternal fire.* From these tremendous words of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ it clearly follows, that alms-giving is a most essential point of the law, since nothing less than a transgression of an essential point of the law could exclude us from the kingdom of Heaven, and make us liable to the everlasting torments of Hell. Every one, therefore, that God has blessed with any share of the substance of this world, should make it a rule to relieve the poor, as often and as far as his abilities will permit. Let those that have much, give much; and those that have but little, give even a slender part of that little they possess; whereby they may merit more in the eyes of God, than the rich by their frequent and plentiful contributions; as appears from the widow's mite, which was of more consequence before Almighty God, as Christ Jesus assures us, than large sums given by others.

It is not only an obligation upon the faithful in general to relieve the poor, but likewise their interest to do so, from the many blessings Almighty God has been pleased to annex to, and entail upon this act of Religion. Those blessings are two-fold; temporal and spiritual. The temporal blessings are visibly contained in several places, in the old and new Law. In the old we find in the 24th chap. of Proverbs, the Holy-Ghost declaring, that, *He that giveth unto the poor, shall not want; but he that despiseth his cries, shall be reduced himself to misery and poverty.* And again in the 29th chap. *He that takes pity on the poor, sets his money at interest unto the Almighty God; who will give it back again.* Further, Christ Jesus says, by the pen of St. Luke, 6th chap. *Give and it shall be given unto you: for with what measure you measure unto others, it shall be measured unto you again.* It must, however, be acknowledged, that Almighty God is not always pleased to crown our charities with temporal blessings, as the latter

latter may be, and frequently are prejudicial to our salvation; but what cannot be doubted, Christians, is, that alms are surely and constantly productive of many great spiritual advantages. These spiritual advantages are likewise of two sorts, relative to the different states a Christian may be in;---a state of sin, or a state of grace. The Holy Ghost declares, that *as water quenches fire, so do alms resist sin*: and the great Apostle assures us, that *Charity covereth a multitude of sins*: Not by remitting sin directly, for this is reserved to the power of the sacraments alone; but by moving the Almighty God to pity, and inducing him to grant us the grace to repent, and thereby obtain the forgiveness of all our sins. From a knowledge of it's powerful effects, the Prophet Daniel advised the wicked king of Babylon, Nabuchodonosor, who had carried his iniquities to the highest pitch, to *redeem his sins by alms*.

But when do the power and influence of alms appear strongest, with regard to sinners? At the close of life, Christians, when all the vanities and pride of life glide away in smoke---when our good or bad actions alone remain to attend us to the dread tribunal of God's justice, where we must all appear to receive an irrevocable sentence. At that dreadful hour I say, the sinner will find alms a powerful support, perhaps the only resource to rescue him from the gates of hell, and obtain mercy, in the presence of his God. *Happy is the man*, says the Royal Prophet, *who takes notice of the indigent and poor, for the Lord will deliver him*, when? *In the evil day*, when he will be threatened with eternal misery and pain. Besides, Christ Jesus exhorts us, in the Gospel of this day, to *make friends to ourselves of the mammon of iniquity, that when we shall fail, they may receive us into the eternal mansions*; from whence it clearly follows, that the greatest hopes a sinner can entertain, at the last hour, are grounded on his alms and charities.

With regard to the just likewise, nothing is more useful or profitable than alms. For 1st, they essentially help to atone for all their past sins and offences,
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even as to the temporal punishments due to them. 2d, they obtain new and powerful graces and aids from God, to resist sin and fulfil his holy laws. 3d. they add greatly to the glory and happiness reserved for them in the kingdom of Heaven: for Christ Jesus declares, *that even a glass of cold water given in his name, shall not want its reward.* What extraordinary advantages are those, Christians, and how worthy our attention! Should they not prevail upon every individual to be charitable to the poor upon every occasion, as far as circumstances will permit. Let every one give, as Christ Jesus directs, and give in the spirit of religion, for the sake of Christ, to satisfy the justice of God, to obtain mercy at his hands, or an increase of rewards in the life to come. Let every one, I say, *give in this manner, and it shall be given unto him,* as the Lord God declares; that is, the grace of God in this life, and eternal happiness in the next. *Amen.*

NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

WHAT could have been the meaning, Christians, that Christ Jesus who bore his own sufferings with the greatest resolution imaginable, should have wept at the sight of Jerusalem? A certain regard and tenderness for that city, and a sentiment of pity for the many calamities that were in a short time to befall it; for, as Christ Jesus was the Son of David, according to the flesh, he must have had a particular regard for the Jews, as being the descendants of Abraham, to whom the promises were made; and whom the Almighty God had often assured that he would bless his posterity for ever; that he would look upon his descendants as his own people; that he would take them under his special protection; that he would make them powerful and great; and finally, that the Messiah should be born of his race. As he knew, therefore, in spirit, the evils that were in a short time to fall upon his brethren, he cried out
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in a transport of grief at the sight of the unfortunate Jerusalem, *Hadst thou but known, and even in this thy day, the things which pertain to thy peace, but are now hidden from thine eyes.*

This is a broken sentence, and the natural effusion of uncommon grief. But the meaning is, hadst thou but known even in this thy day, the things which pertain to thy peace and felicity; namely, acknowledging Christ Jesus as the true Messiah, the Son of God and Redeemer of Mankind; hadst thou but known these things and the heavy misfortunes which are soon to befall thee, thou wouldst certainly weep along with me. *For the day shall shortly come, when thine enemies shall encompass thee with a trench, enclose and straighten thee on every side, then beat thee to the ground, so as not to leave a stone upon a stone.* This was a prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem, which was literally fulfilled in about 37 years afterwards, by the Emperor of Rome, who besieged, took and demolished it, after beating the Jews in several battles, reduced it's Temple, (the pride and glory of Jerusalem,) tumbled its buildings and its walls into one huge heap of ruins. These were the evils which our Saviour foresaw in spirit, would soon come upon Jerusalem, which moved him to tears from a sentiment of compassion for that unfortunate city, and all its most unfortunate inhabitants. But what was the cause of these great and unspeakable evils? Christ Jesus points it out in the Gospel of this day, wherein he declares, that the Jews were to be treated with all that severity, on account of their perverseness; because they did not know, nor would they know, the time of the visitation of the Lord; that is, the time in which Christ Jesus the Messiah or Redeemer promised to their forefathers, vouchsafed to visit and make himself known unto them.

What Christ Jesus said publicly of Jerusalem upon this occasion, is only an image, the holy Fathers say, of what the Almighty says inwardly unto every sinner, by the inspirations of his Holy Spirit or Grace, during his prevarication or obstinacy in sin. For every grace granted a sinner in this situation, is a visit from the Lord.

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The time of receiving this grace is the time of the heavenly visitation. By inward inspiration the Spirit of God saith unto every sinner, *Hadst thou but known the things that pertain to thy peace*; that is, the excessive bounty and goodness of God, who is thus inviting thee to repentance, and the great and valuable blessings that must follow thy returning unto the Lord, thou certainly wouldst obey the voice of Heaven, and forsake thy wicked ways. Hadst thou likewise known the severe punishments that are reserved for thine obstinacy and perverseness, thou certainly wouldst weep and bemoan with tears, thy miserable and dreadful fate. It cannot be doubted, Christians, but the Almighty does pursue the sinner in his prevarication, and by his holy grace invite him to repentance. For he says in the 1st chap. of Proverbs, *I have called you, and you have refused to answer my call*; and again, *I stand at the door and strike*; that is, I stand at the door of a sinner's heart and seek for admittance. But if a sinner should constantly refuse to answer the Almighty's call, and deny him admittance into his heart, what must the consequence be? Undoubtedly the Almighty, grown weary of seeking for him, will at length withdraw his holy grace in punishment of his obstinacy and perverseness? and in the end give him up a victim to his justice, by assigning him over to the everlasting torments of Hell. *We have done all we could*, the Angel says in the Old Law, *to reclaim Babylon from all its dissolutions, but it would not be reclaimed: Let us, therefore, forsake it, and abandon it to its own misfortunes*. And in the book of Proverbs, 1st chap. *I called and you refused—I will laugh in your destruction—when sudden calamity shall fall on you, and destruction, as a tempest, shall be at hand: When tribulation and distress shall come upon you, then you shall call upon me, and I will not hear*.

Thus it was the Almighty dealt with the Jews, who were given up a prey to their enemies, for their infidelity, although they were the children of the promise, the chosen and distinguished people of God. And this will likewise be the case with all sinners, who obstinately persist in their sinful ways, in opposition to the grace of God, and the voice of Heaven, which

is continually inviting them to repentance. But let us seriously reflect, Christians, may it not be our case in particular? We are all conscious of having sinned—frequently sinned—grievously sinned. Many of us, perhaps, are conscious to themselves, of living daily in a state of sin; even now, although the Almighty God is daily pursuing them in their disobedience, calling and inviting them back by his holy grace, to repentance. For this end he makes them frequently hear the voice of his ministers—for this end he fills their hearts with remorse for the sins they commit—for this end he awakens all their fears, by representing to their minds from time to time, all the dreadful evils of his severe and inflexible judgments—and for this end am I this day sent to call you back, O! you strayed little ones of the house of God—you sinners, whoever you are, *though your sins be red as scarlet, come, forsake your sins, and you shall become white as snow; come, and see how sweet the Lord is; come, for the Lord God has his arms extended to receive—to embrace you as a son.*

What impressions do those strong and continual graces make upon our minds? Do they wean us from sin and convert us unto the Lord? After the prodigious multitude of graces we have been favoured with by Almighty God, since we attained the use of reason; after the many aids we have already and continue daily to receive in the Church of Christ, frequent instructions, participation of the Sacraments, the benefit of the sacrifice, continual prayer and good example; after all these aids, I say, what situation are we in, in the sight of God? Are we not as far removed from the kingdom of Heaven, perhaps farther, than those that never heard of the all-saving name of Christ? Have not the treasures of Heaven been continually lavished upon us to no purpose, and without any fruit unto our souls? How guilty must we not appear in the eyes of God, and what severe punishments must we not expect for thus abusing constantly his choicest gifts, and his most valuable blessings? There is not any one single grace we received, in the whole course of our lives, but we must account for at the tribunal of God.

God. He that received five talents was brought to an account for those five, as well as he that received but the one, was brought to an account for that one. And Christ Jesus declares in the Gospel, that *the more one receives, the more he is accountable unto God.*

What just reasons have we not, Christians, to fear a most dreadful expectation of judgment; as St. Paul says, for the many powerful graces we have received, and the ill use we have made of them. *Many shall come from the East and from the West, our Saviour says, and shall enter the kingdom of Heaven; whilst the children of the kingdom shall be cast forth.* The children of the kingdom are those that are called to the faith of Christ, and consequently called to the kingdom of God; because that is the reward which Christ Jesus hath promised to all those who believe in him and fulfil his holy laws. These children of the kingdom shall be cast forth and excluded for ever from that heavenly kingdom; why? on account of their infidelity to the graces they received.

It becomes then of the last consequence to us, to be obedient to the voice of Heaven, and faithful to the graces we daily receive from Almighty God. *If to-day you hear the voice of the Lord, take care, the Royal Prophet says, you harden not your hearts.* To be obedient to the voice of Heaven, with regard to sinners, is renouncing quickly their sins and all their sinful ways, and returning sincerely unto the Lord; with regard to the just, is corresponding with the grace of God in doing good. Let us, therefore, be attentive hereafter to the visitation of the Lord, by complying faithfully with the graces he imparts, whereby we shall certainly obtain the rewards he has promised to his true and faithful servants in the kingdom of Heaven. *Amen.*

TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE Gospel this day lays before us a very surprising, at the same time a very instructive and improving lesson for our consideration. Two men went up to the Temple to pray, the one a Pharisee, the other a Publican. The Pharisee boasted in the sight of God, of not being either an extortioner, an adulterer, an unjust dealer, or such as the Publican who was along with him; he besides gloried in fasting twice a week, and giving the tythes of all he possessed. The Publican, on the other hand, would not so much as lift up his eyes towards Heaven, but standing afar off, with down-cast eyes, he frequently knocked his breast, saying, *O Lord! be merciful unto me a sinner.* What was the consequence? *The Publican returned home justified rather than the Pharisee.* The Publican obtained pardon and forgiveness from the Almighty hand of God, which the Pharisee did not.

What can be the cause, Christians, of so extraordinary an event? Undoubtedly the humility of the Publican on the one hand, and the pride and presumption of the Pharisee on the other. From this one passage we may learn of what consequence humility is in the sight of God, and how far it is incumbent on us to acquire and practise so necessary a virtue. In the consideration of this question, the motives that should inspire, 1st and 2d, the advantages that flow from humility, present themselves to our view as of singular importance.

The first motive, Christians, is our own littleness and insignificance: For *what is man, that thou O God! lookest on him?* No more than a vile compound of earth; *overwhelmed with miseries*, as Job calls him, *the offspring of corruption, mother and sister to the worms*; full of the most shameful weaknesses and passions; always prone to evil, and extremely averse to every thing that is good; subject to infirmities, sufferings, dissolution and death.

death. Man is, indeed, endowed with reason, and thereby distinguished from the brutal and insensible part of the creation; but is not our very reason our greatest disgrace, by acting, most commonly, in opposition to the dictates of that reason, and in a manner unworthy the very beasts of the field. Our life is but a moment---a shadow that passes---and what we do during the short duration of life, a source of infamy and shame. Notwithstanding all this, people will be so thoughtless—I should have said, so stupid—as to entertain a high opinion of themselves. *Earth and dust thou art*, says the Holy Ghost, *what reason hast thou to pride?* No reason, indeed, Christians; yet it is the folly of a great many to be continually raising themselves, and depressing others. From their behaviour, one should imagine they were not formed of the same clay with the rest of mankind. If they speak, it is in the most contemptuous terms; if they act, it is with the highest arrogance and disdain. *Earth and dust as they are, what reason have they to pride?* It may be objected, that whatever the weakness of man may be, he is still endowed with great perfections.—Admitting he is, whence are those perfections derived? Do they not proceed from the hand of God, *from whom*, as the Apostle says, *all excellent gifts descend?* And if so, what room can there be for vanity or ostentation? *What hast thou*, says St. Paul, *that thou hast not received?* *And if thou hast received all that thou hast, why dost thou glory as if thou received it not?* The first motive, therefore, that should make us humble in the eyes of God, and in the eyes of man, is, our own littleness, misery, and essential dependency; the second motive is, that Christ Jesus commands us to be humble, and to think little of ourselves.

This command is contained in those words to his Disciples, *Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart*. That this is a command, or a precept, of the strictest kind, appears from another passage in the Gospel, wherein we read, that our Saviour, after setting a little child in the midst of his Disciples, said unto them, *Unless you be converted, and become like unto*
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this little one, you shall never enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Here we see, that for want of humility we are certainly to be excluded from the Kingdom of God: whence it follows, that humility is one of the essential and necessary virtues of Christianity, and, consequently, a virtue of indispensable obligation. But what does this virtue consist in? It consists in thinking lowly of ourselves, in the sight of God and in the sight of man; in not seeking, but rather avoiding all honour and distinction before man; in not valuing ourselves too much on account of any advantages of birth, fortune, or merit; in referring any perfections we may have (for perfections there are, and distinguished perfections, both of soul and body) unto the Almighty God, from whom they are derived; in not under-valuing or despising those that are destitute of the like advantages, but rather paying them the respect which is due to them, as rational creatures, and as Christians, who are made to the image and likeness of God. For as rational creatures and as Christians, they are, likewise, the children of God, members of Christ, and, by their adoption in Christ, heirs to the kingdom of Heaven, which is certainly the greatest dignity that man can attain to. *Let every one, in humility, St. Paul says, think others superior unto himself.* By this means we shall become like unto little ones, as Christ Jesus directs, and also partake of the great advantages humility is productive of.

God resisteth the proud, St. James says, and giveth grace to the humble. What grace? The grace of conversion, of improvement in virtue and godliness. Of conversion: There is not a more effectual means of moving the Almighty God to pity, and obtaining mercy at his hands, than humility. This is evident from the example of the publican, in the Gospel this day, who, by humbling himself in the lower part of the Temple, was justified, whilst the proud Pharisee was rejected and left in his sins. The reason of this is, that as God alone is truly and infinitely great, he cannot bear to see an insignificant creature, a worm of the earth, usurping and arrogating unto himself a share

share of the honour and glory which are due to him alone. But humility doth quite the reverse: It pays unto God the honour and glory which are his due, and makes us consider ourselves what we really are—nothing in his eyes; it renders us, therefore, pleasing unto God, and draws down his most valuable gift—conversion. Let us, therefore, make it a point to humble ourselves frequently, in spirit, under the powerful hand of God, as St. Paul directs: to confess in his presence, that honour, power, and dominion are due to him alone; that we are no more than poor, contemptible creatures, full of misery and sin; that we should have been long since a prey to the devouring flames of Hell, had not the Almighty spared us, in his infinite mercy, and given us time to repent. If we would humble ourselves in this manner, in the presence of the Lord, we should certainly be justified, like the humble publican, in the sight of God; that is, we should certainly obtain the grace of forgiveness and conversion, and, likewise, graces of improvement in virtue and godliness.

Christ Jesus says, in the Gospel, *He that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.* How? In grace and merit. This must necessarily be the case, if we consider, that the more excellent any act of virtue is, the more meritorious it becomes in the eyes of God. Now humility is undoubtedly a virtue of the most excellent kind, as it is the foundation and perfection of all virtue. The foundation---because, as St. Cyprian observes, it is impossible to rise to the higher degrees, without first passing through the lower; the perfection---because virtue is like a noble edifice, as St. Augustin observes, which, to rise the higher, must have the foundation more deeply laid. Seeing, therefore, that humility is a virtue of the greatest excellence, it follows that the practice of it must be extremely meritorious, and productive of the greatest blessings from the hands of God. *Whom shall I look upon,* saith the Lord, *by the pen of Isaias, but upon the humble and poor?* And again (Prov. 29), *Glory shall attend the humble in spirit.* The Royal Prophet assures us (in the 101st Psalm),

Pſalm), that *the Almighty looks down on the prayer of the humble, and doth not deſpiſe their prayer*. What incitements are theſe to the practice of humility ! Let each individual examine how far he is acquainted with, or has practiſed this virtue hitherto. Are we not all, for the moſt part, total ſtrangers to, and unuſed in the practice of it, though it be one of the moſt eſſential obligations of religion ? Is it not our chief ſtudy to pleaſe the world, and ſolicit its applauſe ? For the time to come, at leaſt, let us make it a rule to humble ourſelves every day in ſpirit, in the preſence of the Lord ; never to act from a view of vain-glory ; and to fly, to deſpiſe the glory of this world. By this means we ſhall atone for our paſt neglect in this particular, and acquire a certain facility in practiſing this great and neceſſary virtue. By this means we ſhall be exalted, as Chriſt Jeſus declares, not to the vain and paſſing honours of this world, but to a high degree of ſpiritual merit and godlineſs, which will infallibly open to us the gates of glory and happineſs in the world to come. *Amen.*

ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE deaf and dumb man who was miraculoſly cured by our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, as we read in the Goſpel this day, is an image, the holy Fathers ſay, of a ſinner, who, by the frequent commiſſion of ſin, is grown hard, and, as it were, inſenſible to his own ſituation, deaf and dumb to the monitions and inſpirations of the Holy Ghoſt. Deaf in this ſituation, to the voice of Heaven, argues a hardneſs of a moſt lamentable nature ; and dumb, that he is likewise almoſt incapable of addreſſing or making the leaſt application to Almighty God, which is, undoubtedly, the moſt dreadful ſituation a Chriſtian can be in. Whiſt a man retains ſome feeling of his miſery, ſome fear of the judgments of God, ſome

I apprehenſions

apprehensions of Hell, there are always some hopes, let his sins be ever so heinous. One moment's reflection, inspired and improved by the grace of God; a moving sermon or exhortation; the sudden death of a friend; some unforeseen accident, in a word, may excite him to repentance, induce him to forsake his evil ways, and return unto the Lord his God. But should a man grow hard and insensible, and settle in his sins and iniquities with a certain security of mind, it is plain that nothing most commonly does or can ensue, but final impenitence---eternal perdition.

How is it possible to avoid this danger, when people will neither see it, nor fear it, nor take any precautions against it? And what numbers of our brethren are there in this dreadful situation, in the very midst of Christianity! How many are daily walking in the ways of death, who seem as quiet and as contented in their criminal enjoyments, as if assured by divine revelation of eternal happiness! Plunged in the shades of death, they have no thoughts but of enjoying the pleasing, deluding, empty joys of this life, which in a moment must end, but end in their everlasting ruin!

Sinners! *you who have eyes and see not, ears and hear not*; you, who have eyes and ears to see and behold every thing but what concerns you most; you who have hitherto strayed in the paths of error and vice; Oh, why will you be deaf to the voice of God, who now calls on you, by his unworthy minister? Return, I say return to the delights prepared for you in the friendship of your God.

Whence proceeds this insensibility on the part of sinners, this folly and madness? From the justice of God, who, in punishment of their obstinacy in sin, abandons them at length, by withdrawing his holy grace, and delivers them a prey to their own natural weakness and corruption.

Without the grace of God, we cannot so much as think of the things of God, St. Paul says. Whilst the grace of God resides within us, we never lay aside the thoughts of salvation: for the effects of divine grace upon the soul, consist in pious thoughts in the mind, and

and pious emotions in the heart. But if the Almighty should withdraw his grace, it follows we can have no thought or relish for the things of God. *The earthly man*, says St. Paul, *has no taste but for the things of the earth*. Now, Christians, that the Almighty God does withdraw his grace from sinners, in punishment of their repeated sins and transgressions, is a certain principle of religion, grounded upon many plain and incontestable passages of Holy Writ, as in the cases of the impious kings of Babylon, Nabuchodonosor and Balthazar, and *the wicked man King Antiochus*. In the 51st chapter of the Prophet Jeremiah, the Angel of the Lord says, *We have endeavoured to save Babylon, but it would not be saved; let us therefore abandon it*. Again, the Prophet Isaiah, *Seek the Lord, whilst you can find him; invoke him, whilst he is near you: for the time will come, when you cannot find him; because he will quit you, and not hear your petitions*. Besides, we read in the Gospel these dreadful words of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: *You shall seek me, and you shall not find me; and you shall die in your sins*.

From all these passages it plainly appears, that Almighty God frequently abandons the sinner; and, that it is a principle of his eternal wisdom and justice, to leave him to his own weakness and corruption; whereby he necessarily falls into a state of hardness and insensibility. Then, indeed, he truly becomes deaf, and dumb, and blind, and lame: Deaf, in neglecting, despising the calls of Heaven; dumb, in not applying for those aids in the Church of God, whereby *he may be converted and live*; blind, except in sensual vanities; and lame, in the ways that lead to the City of God. And is not this the situation of multitudes of Christians in our days? They not only have frequently offended the Lord—offended him grievously—but continue daily to offend him, in the most heinous and public manner, without the least remorse, or the least fear of the terrible judgments of the Lord. Talk to them of those terrible truths—they are deaf; open wide before them the deep abyss of hell—they are dumb; let them view those flaming floods of fire—

they are blind, they will not see them; let them hear the shrieks and groans of the thousand thousands who are locked up for ever in that region of horrors—they hobble away lame and limping, until destruction, like a tyger, grips them. How comes this? Because the Almighty God has withdrawn his holy grace, in consequence of which they are grown hard in their sins and sinful ways.

You are not, however, to imagine, Christians, that the Almighty ever withdraws his grace so far, even from the greatest sinners, as to leave them destitute of all sort of help or assistance. No: if this were the case the command would then be impossible, and man under an absolute necessity of sinning; which is a principle not consistent either with the goodness of God or the doctrine of his Church. But what you are to understand by what I have said, is, that Almighty God, on account of many heinous transgressions, draws in his hand, and ceases to impart those strong and powerful graces which, well used, would certainly bring about our salvation; graces by which we not only could, but would, in reality, fulfil the Law, and thereby attain to eternal happiness; and is contented with giving such feeble aids and assistances as enable us indeed to see, but which will never enable us to work out our salvation. Graces of this kind do, undoubtedly, produce some faint glimmerings in the mind (not unlike the feeble light which the benighted traveller may receive from the casual appearance of a star); but clouds of darkness hang over the mind, which hinder it from perceiving its real and eternal interests in their proper light. They may excite some pious emotions in the heart, but so weak and ineffectual, that they always prove useless, and leave us centered in our sins and iniquities.

Now, Christians, let me ask you, can any thing be more dreadful than this state of hardness or insensibility, to which a sinner is reduced by his continual transgressions, wherein he neither has feeling of his misery, nor fear of the justice of God, nor desire of returning unto the Lord? May we not justly account

count a situation of this kind the very commencement of reprobation or eternal perdition? But is not this situation, all-dreadful as it is, that of a great many amongst us? Or, although it should not be so, is it not very much to be feared it will soon be so? It is an undeniable principle of religion, that the grace of God is lessened in proportion to our infidelity: *He that hath not*, our Saviour says, *shall even lose what he hath*. The most slender fault we commit causes a deprivation or diminution of grace; a great or considerable fault causes a still greater deprivation: what, then, must follow from repeated sins and transgressions? from a continued chain of iniquities? from a whole life spent in the most flagrant violations of the Law? When this is the case, the Almighty God only waits to see the measure of their iniquities filled, in order to assign them over to the everlasting torments of Hell. In the mean time the sinner may lull himself asleep, in the very midst of danger, and on the very brink of destruction; but this calm is the forerunner of the most dreadful storms, as the punishments of God always fall the heavier the longer they are deferred: *When sinners think themselves most in safety*, St. Paul says, *then sudden ruin and destruction rush down upon them*.

Let every one of us, therefore, consider seriously with himself, how much cause he has to dread and fear. To judge of our past sins, even from our present course of life, have we not the strongest reasons to apprehend that Almighty God will, in a short time, abandon us, by which means we must fall into a state of hardness and insensibility—the next step to reprobation. The only way to prevent so great a misfortune, is the fear of God: for which reason the Royal Prophet used frequently to conjure the Lord *to pierce his very flesh with his fear*—the fear of his most dreadful judgments and unappeasable justice. Let, in fine, the fear of the Lord be deeply impressed on our hearts. If at any time you fall, the fear of the Lord will incite you to arise quickly, by repentance. The longer you continue in a state of sin, the more the Almighty will withdraw himself from you, until, per-

haps, at length he abandons you for ever. But if the fear of God rules in your hearts, so far as not to suffer you to remain peaceably in a state of sin for any time, then you may hope for mercy in this life, and eternal mercies in the life to come. *Amen.*

TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE duty of parents towards their children, is a duty of the first magnitude, as it regards God and civil society. If the spirit of Christianity obliges us to do good to all, how much more strict is that obligation towards those to whom nature unites us by the closest ties? And yet people generally forget their strictest obligations, even where the motives are most urgent to fulfil them. This reflection applies particularly to parents, as parents: wherefore, I feel it incumbent to lay before them their obligations, and afterwards the motives for fulfilling them.

The character of a Christian parent, is one of the most illustrious the world has ever produced; as thereby they co-operate with God in planting his faith, and rearing up subjects for Heaven. But this character applies only where the duties annexed to a parent are discharged. The first duty is instruction. The spirit of God says, in Deuteronomy, *this is the law I give you. My will is, that it be engraved in your hearts; but, at the same time, that it pass from your hearts upon your lips, to announce it unto your children.* There is the obligation; which is laid down in other places also; and you cannot neglect it without transgressing a material point of the law. In discharging this duty, St. Chrysostom says, parents are the apostles of their children: As the instruction of the world was committed to the Apostles, so is the instruction of each growing family committed to the parents; for which reason St. Paul calls a private Christian family a *domestic Church*. Whoever, then, is blest with children, should

should take special care to *instruct them and bring them up under the yoke of religion from their earliest infancy*, as the same Spirit of God says, in Eccles. chap. 7. To instruct them, first, in the end for which they were created, namely, to serve God here, and enjoy him hereafter; and, secondly, the means necessary to obtain this end. Those means are, belief in the mysteries of faith, the most Holy Trinity, the incarnation, the commandments of God and his Church, the sacraments of the New Law and the preparations they require; in a word, whatever God commands, in order to salvation, and what he forbids, under pain of damnation. Christian parents! tell your tender offspring, tell them frequently, they were brought into life not to become rich and powerful, but poor in spirit, meek, and humble; not to pass their days in pleasures or delights, but to despise its fleeting pleasures and take up the cross—to worship and adore Almighty God, to serve him, by fulfilling his laws, which lead to life everlasting. Tell your little ones, and strike it deep into their tender hearts, that the greatest misfortune that can befall them, is, to offend Almighty God, by transgressing any one material point of his holy laws; because thereby they forfeit the grace of God, which is more valuable than all the treasures upon earth, and expose themselves to eternal perdition. Tell them, I say, their love for God should make them resist all trials, the loss of fortune, of liberty, of life. Thus the apostolic functions of a parent are discharged, in training up to the love and fear of God, those whom they have already brought into existence. Is this the rule that's followed? No: Educating their children in the principles of religion is not the rule that is followed by the generality of parents; and I speak to the generality. They instruct them with care in all the ways and vanities of the world; they teach them the rules of dress, the terms and niceties of fashion, a genteel deportment, sprightly turns of conversation; every art, in fine, of pleasing a mortal eye, and gaining the esteem and applause of mankind. But as for the principles of religion, that they never mind; where-

by their children live and die destitute of virtue. Can it be otherwise, when the corruption of the world is such, that persons of the best education and the greatest caution, can scarcely preserve themselves pure and untainted? How must it then be with those young persons, introduced into the world before they know what the world is—placed amidst its dangers before they know what danger is? Oh! how pleasing to the vanity of a worldly parent to see her child cut a figure at a public assembly, and draw the attention, perhaps the admiration, of the thoughtless part of mankind! Wait a while, and you shall see this darling child, whom the criminal parent bred up to vanity and exposed to the infectious air of the world, without the safeguard of religious principles, forfeit—shall I say her honour? no; but what is worse—her religion. To prevent the like misfortunes in future, let every parent take special care to impress strongly the love and fear of God upon the hearts of their children, and a fear of the sinful ways of the world. This is your first obligation: the second is example.

Instruction alone may inform the mind, and teach children what to do, but it will never stir them up to action. Enemies by nature to all restraint, they never will apply to the practices of religion, if they be not, as it were, led by the hand, and excited by example. If, therefore, example be omitted, though the instruction be complete, the work is unfinished. It is raising with one hand, and destroying with the other. But when example is joined to instruction, it never fails to influence the mind and strongly affect the senses, at an age which is led more by custom or example, than by reason or reflection. Docility, vivacity, curiosity, a certain desire of imitation, are discernable in children, which naturally lead them on to action. What they see frequently done, they frequently do; what they frequently do becomes easy and familiar; what is easy and familiar, passes into a habit; and what passes into a habit, becomes a second nature. Thus children by instruction and example are made solidly and lastingly virtuous;

whence

whence it follows, that example must necessarily be one of the most indispensable duties of a parent: for as parents are, according to St. Chrysostom, the associates of Christ, in the salvation of their children, it follows they are in conscience bound to employ the most effectual means to compass that end, and consequently the very powerful and effectual means of example. Every Christian parent should, therefore, follow up their instructions by examples of virtue in their own conduct; examples of godliness, by praying with them at stated hours, going with them to the most holy sacrament on certain days, and assisting daily (if possible) along with them at the sacrifice of the New Law; examples of humility, by thinking and speaking lowly of themselves, and treating inferiors with condescension; examples of charity, speaking always well of their neighbour, except in things criminal in their nature; examples of self-denial, by refraining constantly from all excess, and observing punctually in their presence the fasts and other penitential works commanded by the Church. Instead of acting thus, parents are the first to lay before their children the most pernicious examples: examples of impiety, by cursing, swearing, and blaspheming in their presence; examples of immodesty, by talking before them, either in words of double meaning, or of subjects *that should never be mentioned*, as St. Paul says; examples of pride, by enlarging continually in their praise, and setting themselves above the rest of mankind; examples of detraction, by speaking eternally ill of their neighbours, exaggerating their faults or blackening their virtuous actions; examples of immortification, by committing frequent excesses, and paying no regard to the days of abstinence or penance prescribed by the Church of God. Now let me ask, what impressions must examples of this kind make upon the soft and flexible minds of Children? Undoubtedly the worst impressions: for how often do we hear mere infants blaspheme the awful and venerable name of God, before they know how to invoke it? talking nakedly of the greatest obscenities, before they can have any

notion of modesty? repeating the numerous train of vices, before they are capable of distinguishing any one single virtue! Whence proceeds this early depravity? From your example, O unhappy parents! for which you shall account at the dreadful tribunal of God's justice. What does King David say? Listen to it, Christians, and to what follows: the subject is momentous, and demands your most serious attention. He tells you, the Israelites, after falling into idolatry, were so blind as to sacrifice their sons and daughters to devils. Their false and cruel piety could bear to see the blood of their innocent babes flowing before their idols. You do more. They only sacrificed the body: you destroy both body and soul, by sacrificing your little ones, from their very infancy, to the infernal spirits—the spirit of vanity, the spirit of pride, the spirit of ambition, the spirit of idleness, the spirit of ungodliness and folly. Was it for this end that Almighty God blessed you with children? Was it to sacrifice their souls and bodies, by your wickedness and your folly, to the everlasting torments of Hell? This is generally the consequence, where parents neglect to improve and edify their children by virtuous example. This should rouse all parents to bend their thoughts upon discharging their duty towards their children, according to the rules and maxims of religion. *You are my joy*, says St. Paul to his new converts, *you are my joy, my glory, and my crown*; because they were the rich and precious fruits of his apostolic labours, the glorious spoils he had taken from the enemies of Christ, and the eternal monuments he was to raise to the name and honour of Christ Jesus, in his heavenly kingdom. The same may justly be applied by those Christian parents who teach and instruct their children by word and example: *You are my joy, my glory, and my crown*; “you I have educated from your infancy in the love and fear of God; you I have instructed in the necessary principles of religion; you I have led and, as it were, conducted by the hand to the practice of every virtue. The day will come, and shortly come, when I shall feel the inexpressible consolation of presenting

“ sending you at the Throne of God, and delivering
 “ you up, as so many glorious prizes, into the hands
 “ of your Redeemer, to bless and glorify his holy
 “ name during the unbounded length of eternity.”
 To aim at this is your duty. Let us briefly consider
 the motives for discharging this duty.

The first motive is the glory of God. To what purpose has God from the beginning ordained a constant and uninterrupted succession of men? Is it to stock the earth with people? Those who judge from *the wisdom of the flesh*, as St. Paul says, may think so; but religion points out a nobler end—to complete the number of the elect: as the Spirit of God says, *man was created for the glory of God*. As man is the parent of his own immediate offspring, so Almighty God is the universal parent of all; and children are no more, as St. Chrysostom says, than valuable and sacred pledges lodged by Providence in the hands of parents, to call them back at a proper time; whence it follows, that the chief care of all parents should be, to preserve, improve, and cultivate them sacred pledges, in order to give them up, when called for, in the full perfection he requires. Otherwise parents do not discharge their trust; and instead of true and faithful servants, they give up an impious race, who wage continual war with Almighty God in this world, and will for ever blaspheme his holy name in the next. As the salvation of your children is a necessary consequence of a virtuous education, so their temporal interests are materially connected therewith, as they derive from thence a steady principle of honesty and true honour, which must necessarily recommend them to public esteem in every situation. From a virtuous education, a nation is blessed with just and munificent princes, faithful and uncorrupt ministers, brave and undaunted warriors, vigilant and impartial magistrates, honest and loyal subjects. But taking the subject in a religious view, as it is connected with our salvation, which is the first object, I beg your attention for a few minutes longer.

Now, Christians, the connection our education has with salvation, is so very great, that the one depends
 most

most commonly on the other. I have said most commonly, to prevent any objection that might arise in your minds from some extraordinary intervention of Providence. The foundation must be laid in infancy, by inculcating strongly on the mind the wholesome principles of religion. Then the mind is free from prejudice---untainted with error---unbiaſſed by paſſion---ſuſceptible, like wax, of every impreſſion; it follows, that early impreſſions of the love and fear of God, the neceſſity and advantages of fulfilling his holy laws, muſt obtain a ſufficient influence over all the ſucceeding actions of life. It may, it does indeed, happen ſometimes, that the moſt Chriſtian and virtuous education is loſt amidſt the violence of paſſion and the corrupted ways of life. The fire of youth, ſolicitation, example, power and opportunity of unlawful gratification, frequently bear down the moſt virtuous principles; but early leſſons of virtue often revive, and bear down, in turn, all the aberrations of thoughtleſs levity or youthful folly. When the ſtorms of paſſion and the fire of youth are allayed, the early-planted ſeeds of virtue will ſhoot up, and bear forth, in holy reflections and pious reſolutions, a rich harveſt of piety in their future lives. But where a Chriſtian education is wanting, you ſeldom behold a continuance of virtuous actions, nor a reformation from evil ones. How can you expect virtue where the principles of virtue were never ſown? *Whatever a man ſows*, St. Paul ſays, *that he will reap*: If, therefore, a parent neglects ſowing the early ſeeds of virtue, what expectation can ariſe of ſeeing the children bring forth the inſtimable fruits of juſtice? The heart of man is a fruitful ſoil: fruitful, from the depravity of human nature, in brambles and briars, in vice and error, unleſs early cultivated by a virtuous education. *Such as walk according to their own ways*, the corrupted ways of rude and unpoliſhed nature, *in their early and youthful days*, will not recede from thence, even in the very laſt ſtage of life, the decadence of age. Seeing, therefore, that a virtuous life is generally the conſequence of a virtuous education, you clearly behold how ſtrong the motive

motive that should induce every parent to give their children this virtuous education, whereon their temporal and eternal welfare so essentially depend. Parents need no incitement to love their children: this is the first call of nature: but let them shew their love, by loving them in Christ; loving them so as to procure the eternal happiness of their souls and bodies. The only way of doing this, is, to rear them up in the love and fear of God. Look over the whole catalogue of human woes; look farther, look into Hell; the damned shall tell you, and all the wretches on earth shall tell you, their calamities arose from—what? the want of a virtuous education. But observe, for it deserves great observation, those cruel, neglectful, unchristian parents, will share in the eternal perdition of their children, and increase the torments of Hell by mutual rage, mutual invectives, mutual maledictions. “O cursed parents!” will they say, “you have been the only cause of our eternal destruction. Nature made you our parents, but you became our assassins; the Almighty charged you with the care of our salvation, but you have led us on in the ways of damnation; by your means we might have been in possession of the kingdom of Heaven, but by your means we are now in the furnaces of Hell, and shall remain there for ever and ever.”

If, therefore, Christians, you have any zeal for the everlasting happiness of your children; any fear of their eternal misery; any desire of partaking of the spoils of Heaven; any apprehensions of sharing in their perdition, watch carefully over their tender years; instruct them in the ways of Heaven from their infancy; inform their youthful minds of all the necessary principles of religion; inspire their tender and flexible hearts with the love and fear of God; see that they know and perform the duty of Christians; teach them, by your example, what to do, what to avoid; deter them continually from evil; incite them continually to good. By this means you will love them in, for, and with Christ Jesus; you will deliver them from Hell, and lead them and yourselves to the Kingdom of Heaven. *Amen.*

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ALTHOUGH our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ could have instantly cured the ten lepers, mentioned in the Gospel of this day, yet we see, Christians, he was pleased to send them to the priests, before he would cure them, in order to shew us, as the holy Fathers say, the necessity we are under of applying to the ministers of Christ, in order to be cured of the leprosy of sin. As it was the business of the priests of the Old Law to examine and judge whether a leper was perfectly cured, before he could be restored to public society, or suffered to mix and converse with the rest of the faithful; so it is the business of the priests of the New Law, or the ministers of Christ, to examine into the inward state or dispositions of a sinner, before he can be restored to the grace of God; and after finding him in the proper dispositions, to cure him, in fact, of the leprosy of the soul, by granting and imparting the forgiveness of his sins. The power of remitting sin is in the ministers of the New Law alone, as Christ Jesus hath vested this power in his Apostles, saying unto them, *Receive ye the Holy Ghost, whose sins ye remit, they shall be remitted unto them; and whose sins ye retain, they shall be retained.* Although it be unquestionable that the ministers of Christ have a power of remitting sin, yet this power cannot be exerted, nor has it the least effect without certain dispositions on the part of the sinner. The conditions are contrition, confession, and satisfaction.

Contrition is an inward, supernatural, universal, and supreme sorrow, for having offended the Almighty, by violating his holy laws, attended with a firm and effectual resolution of never more offending him, for any consideration whatsoever. This sorrow must, 1st, Be inward; that is, sincerely lodged in the soul: for there is a sorrow barely apparent, barely consisting in words, and this is not a proper, nor sufficient disposition for the Sacrament. For the Holy Ghost says
unto

unto all sinners who mean to repent and return to the Lord, *Convert ye unto the Lord with your whole heart; and again, Tear your hearts with sorrow, and not your garments.* That is, let your sorrow be real and sincere, and not confined to outward signs or expressions. This sorrow must be, 2d, Supernatural; that is, it must proceed from the Spirit of God, or a motive of religion; such as, the offence given Almighty God, the ingratitude and injustice of violating his holy laws, and exposing ourselves to eternal perdition. For if our sorrow were grounded upon the shame or infamy attendant upon sin, the misfortunes that may flow from it in the eyes of the world, or any other human motive, it were not supernatural sorrow; it were only human concern, and consequently no sufficient preparation for the Sacrament. It must, 3d, Be universal in extent, and embrace all mortal sins without exception; for if we should retain a wilful and criminal affection to any one mortal sin, or any one creature in particular, or practice, or principle, which are sinful in themselves, our conversion to God could not be entire, and therefore we should still remain sinners in the eyes of the Lord. Penitential sorrow must, 4th, Be supreme; it must exceed any sorrow we may have for any temporal loss or misfortune whatsoever. For, as the good, sin deprives us of, is the greatest that can be imagined—eternal happiness; so the evil it brings on us is the greatest of all evils—eternal perdition; it clearly follows, the sorrow for sin should be supremely great—greater than all the concerns of this life. This sorrow must, in fine, be attended with a firm and effectual purpose of amendment—a firm, sincere, and effectual resolution of never committing any one mortal sin, for any consideration whatsoever. It is impossible for any one to be truly concerned for his sins, if he is not fully resolved to avoid them evermore. It is likewise impossible that our concern for having sinned be supremely great, if we be not sincerely disposed to sacrifice our dearest interests, our fortunes, and our very lives, rather than offend Almighty God again.

The sorrow we are bound to have or conceive for our sins is of two sorts; the one perfect, the other imperfect. Perfect sorrow is called contrition by Divines, and proceeds purely from the love of God; so that whoever has a perfect sorrow for his sins, is concerned for having offended God, purely for his own sake; because he is infinitely great and good, infinitely amiable and perfect, without any regard to eternal rewards, or eternal punishments. This high perfection of sorrow is not necessary for the Sacrament. It even justifies the sinner, or effaces our sin before we receive the Sacrament; though it always leaves an obligation of having recourse to the Sacrament at a proper time. This it is necessary for you to know, Christians, because you may be placed in such circumstances as may make it impossible for you to confess. In cases of this nature, by producing an act of perfect sorrow or contrition, you can obtain the forgiveness of all your sins. That sorrow which is imperfect is called attrition by Divines, and is grounded not purely on the love of God, but on an inferior motive of religion--the fear of eternal punishments, or the loss and deprivation of eternal happiness. This sorrow when attended with an effectual desire of fulfilling all justice, and consequently with a beginning of the love of God, is sufficient for the Sacrament.

These are, Christians, the essential qualifications of that sorrow which is requisite for the Sacrament. If our sorrow be of this kind, that is, if it be internal, supernatural, universal, supremely great, and attended with a firm and effectual resolution of never more offending the Almighty God, for any consideration whatsoever, we have the first essential preparation for the Sacrament. But if any one of the above mentioned qualifications be wanting, we do not receive the benefit of the Sacrament, but rather commit a sacrilege; that is the most heinous sin we can be guilty of in the eyes of God, by going to the Sacrament without the dispositions it requires. What now must we think of the preparation of the greater part of the Christians of our days? Is their sorrow sincere and not barely confined to words? Does it proceed from the Spirit of God? Is it grounded on a pure motive of religion?

religion? Does it extend to all sins and transgressions whatsoever? Are they sincerely and firmly resolved to sacrifice their fortunes and their lives, rather than transgress any one material point of the law? On the contrary are they not plainly and visibly determined to follow the same principles, the same ways, the same practices they did before, criminal as they are in the sight of the Lord?

The second disposition for the Sacrament is confession, or a declaration of our sins to a lawful Priest. For, as the spiritual power vested in the ministers of Christ, authorizes them not only to remit, but likewise to retain our sins; for the proper discharge of their ministry it is necessary for them to know when to retain and when to remit, which they can never do without a proper declaration or information from the sinner. This confession or declaration must be sincere and entire; that is, we must confess all the mortal sins we are guilty of, their different kinds and aggravations; for should we omit declaring any one mortal sin, either through fear, shame or neglect, we commit a sacrilege. But suppose one forgot a mortal sin, what is the consequence? If the sin be forgotten, for want of a due examination of conscience, the forgetting it is criminal in itself; consequently a mortal sin, and a sacrilege besides. Suppose, likewise, one should omit accusing himself of many things, because he does not scruple them: If these things be really sinful, he is guilty of a sacrilege every time he goes to the Sacrament. Every man is not a judge of the lawfulness or unlawfulness of every action. This is the business of the Doctors of the Law, whom Christ Jesus hath appointed in his Church to expound the law. If, therefore, any one refuses following their decisions, and set up his own private opinions in opposition to their's, he is certainly guilty and culpable in the eyes of the Lord.

It is not our sins alone, and the number of our sins, we are obliged to confess, but likewise their different kinds and aggravations. For instance, it is a sin to steal any thing in general, but it is a sacrilege to steal any thing consecrated to the worship of God, or belonging to his Church. Therefore, in a case of this kind,

kind, it is not enough to say you are guilty of stealing, but it is necessary to add, you stole something belonging to the Church, because this circumstance alters the nature of the sin. It is, likewise, a sin to steal from any one in general; but to steal even a small sum from a poor body, whose entire dependance is thereon, is a particular aggravation of the sin, which must be specified in confession.

The third disposition for the Sacrament is satisfaction or penance. For although the eternal punishments due to our sins are remitted, by virtue of the Sacrament, yet there are some temporal punishments we are bound to undergo, in reparation of the injuries we had offered unto God; and this is the reason why the ministers of Christ impose, and are bound to impose upon all sinners, a penance proportionable to their sins. There is, however, this difference between this part of the Sacrament and those others, that omitting the penance given in the Sacrament, doth not annul it, or render it sacrilegious, as any defect in the others does. The omission of the penance is, indeed, a mortal sin, but doth not destroy the virtue of the Sacrament. But if any one should give himself the custom of neglecting his penance, it is plain he had not the other essential dispositions which must have rendered all his confessions null and sacrilegious.

From all that I have said, Christians, on this head, what are we now to conclude? 1st, To be extremely thankful to God for having left us so powerful a remedy in his Church, as the Sacrament of Confession. 2d, To convince ourselves that it is not confessing our sins, but confessing them with the proper dispositions that justifies us in the sight of God. And 3d, To do all that lies in our power to obtain these necessary dispositions, as often as we approach the Sacrament. If we do this, Christians, we shall be made partakers of the great and inestimable blessings that are derived from this Sacrament—the grace of God in this life, and eternal happiness in the next. *Amen.*

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

IT is impossible to serve two masters, and Christ Jesus our blessed Lord and Redeemer has said so, in the Gospel this day; because their respective interests are incompatible with each other, and what is pleasing to one must necessarily be displeasing to the other. It is impossible to serve God and mammon — God and the world: because the laws and maxims of God, are in direct opposition to the laws and maxims of the world. For what is it that God chiefly and principally requires from every Christian? *To seek the kingdom of Heaven before all things.* But what the world directs, is, to seek the riches, the pleasures and honours of this life, even before the kingdom of God. What God requires, as laid down in St. Paul, is, *that we use this world as if we used it not, and possess all things, as if we possessed them not,* by keeping our hearts continually disengaged: what the world prescribes is, that we entertain a strong and inviolable attachment to the frail and perishable possessions of this world. What God requires of us, is that we forgive the greatest injuries; and do good unto those, that do evil unto us: But the world requires, that we return the slightest injuries, and pursue every affront we receive, with the utmost fury and revenge. What the Lord requires is, that those who mean to become first in the grace of God, become last in the eyes of man, by an humble and christian deportment; but what the world requires is, that we constantly aspire and place ourselves, if possible, in the highest stations, although it were by means of the vilest oppression and injustice, or though unpossessed of talents or qualifications. In a word, Christians, there is not any one situation of life wherein the laws and maxims of the world, do not evidently clash with the laws and maxims of Christ Jesus; and from this continual opposition it is plain, it is impossible to
serve

serve two masters—God and the world; as Christ Jesus declares in the Gospel of this day.

From this impossibility of serving God and the world, what should a Christian conclude? undoubtedly to serve God and renounce the world: For all the advantages of this world can never make us eternally happy. On the contrary they are the greatest obstacle to our eternal happiness; whereas serving God and renouncing this world, and its fleeting, fading, perishable pleasures, leads infallibly to everlasting happiness. Instead of drawing this just inference, people in general conclude quite the reverse; and because they find it impossible to serve God and the world, they entirely lay aside the service of God, which alone leads to eternal life, and give themselves up entirely to the world, which infallibly leads to everlasting sorrow. *What will it avail a man, says Christ, to gain the whole world if he should lose his soul? Or what is it that can make the least compensation for the loss of his soul?* Suppose a man upon his death-bed, who had lived many years in the world, with all the success he could wish for; who by his care and industry had amassed a large fortune, which entitled him to all the pleasures and distinctions of life: suppose I say a man of this character upon his death-bed, What will his sentiments be at that last and dreadful hour, with regard to this world and the world to come? Upon the point of seeing the world vanish before him, with all its riches, pleasures and distinctions; upon the point of appearing before the supreme master of Heaven and Earth, the most dreadful judge of the living and the dead; to give an account of all the actions of his life, how must he be affected with regard to this world? He certainly would forfeit all the Empires upon Earth, were they at his disposal, in a situation of this kind; in order to prolong his life for a few years, to serve God alone. Then he will conceive, how monstrous a folly it is, to give up every title to the kingdom of Heaven, for the frail and short-lived riches and advantages of this world. Then will he conceive how truly wise they were, whom he thought fools—those, who despised the
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the world to serve Almighty God---those, who preferred retirement, prayer, sobriety, mortification and the practice of good works in general, to all the glaring, false and superficial enjoyments of life.

And why do not we, Christians, assume the same sentiments at present? Impossible as it is to serve two masters---God and the world, why don't we at present declare for the service of God? why? because you say, it is impossible for one engaged in the world, to give himself up to the service of God. How was it possible for David to do so, even upon the Throne? He had undoubtedly more business, more important occupations than any one of us can pretend to. He was a great and powerful King, charged with the care of a whole nation; taken up in time of war with the management and conduct of armies, and in peace with the laborious occupation of administering justice unto the public; yet he could find time enough to adore and worship the Almighty God, even seven times a day, as he declares himself in his psalms. Many other Kings and Princes have done the like, even in latter days: and if others do not follow their virtuous example, it is not from want of ability or opportunity; but because it is not pleasing to them to do so, because they suffer themselves to be so blinded with the dazzling shew and appearance of this world, that they have not even time to think of Almighty God.

But is it this world that created us? Is it this world that redeemed us from the slavery of sin, and tyranny of Hell? Is it this world that sanctified us, and raised us to the sublime condition of children of God? Is it this world that promised to crown our fidelity with eternal happiness---the joys and glory of the kingdom of Heaven? No, Christians, no. These great and inestimable blessings are derived from God alone. What then, Christians, what can influence such excessive attachment as we shew for this world? What has it, or can it bestow, worthy our attachment? All that the world bestows, are troubles, anxieties, disappointments; at most a few empty and
transitory

transitory pleasures, that must end in wild despair and eternal perdition. Are these sufficient motives to outweigh the great principles of religion that should prevail upon us to despise the world and serve God alone? From him alone we received all that we are, all that we possess; and it is he alone that can make us eternally happy or eternally miserable in the life to come.

Again you may say, is it not incumbent on a man engaged in the world, to provide for his family and children? undoubtedly it is: but without prejudice to his soul. His family and children are of great consequence unto him, it is true; but his salvation is and should appear of greater consequence in his eyes. Let them therefore be provided for, but without that anxiety and solicitude which manifestly absorb all his thoughts and all his time, and make him frequently unmindful of his duty to God and the eternal concerns of his soul. Let God and his soul be his first and chief concern; let every other lawful object be taken next into consideration. What can be more reasonable or more necessary, than to provide for the necessities of life? Yet we read in the Gospel of this day, that our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ forbids us to be over anxious even on this head: *Be not solicitous, says he, for your life, what to eat; nor for your body, what to be clothed with. Behold the fowls of the air; they sow not, neither do they reap; yet your Heavenly father feeds them. Consider the lillies of the field, how they grow; they labour not; yet not even Solomon in all his glory, was clothed like unto one of them. Now if God in this manner feeds the birds of the air, and cloaths in this manner the grass, or flowers of the field, how much more will he feed and cloath you, O you of little faith! who are much more valuable than the birds of the air, or the flowers of the field? Seek therefore first the kingdom of God and his justice, and all these things shall be given you besides.*

From this whole passage, Christians, two things appear evident; the first, that there is an anxiety for the world, which is criminal in the eyes of God, inasmuch as Christ Jesus forbids it: and the second, that

that Christ Jesus has promised to provide for those that seek the kingdom of God before all things. He may not indeed grant them what may be pleasing to, or deemed necessary for their vanity, ambition or extravagance; but he certainly will grant them what is sufficient, proper, and consistent with their salvation. But when is our attachment to the world criminal? 1st. It is always criminal, when our application to the concerns of this life, or the advantages of this world, is so great, as to make us overlook any essential duty of religion, the love and worship due to the Almighty God, and the charity and benevolence due to our neighbour, 2d. It is always criminal, when to purchase, encrease or preserve any interest or advantage of this world, we are disposed to transgress or actually do transgress, any one material point of the Law, or commit any one mortal sin; because that in cases of this nature, it is plain, that the love of the world and not the love of God, rules and presides in the heart.

To conclude, let us convince ourselves of two essential points, with regard to salvation. 1st, That it is impossible to serve God and the world. 2d, That in order to serve God, we must renounce the world, in affection; that is, disengage our hearts from the world, so as never to value its riches, its pleasures or its distinctions in any manner inconsistent with the Law of God. If we love the world, we cannot love God above all things; and if we do not love God above all things, we cannot fulfil his Law; for the love of God above all things is the first and greatest precept of the Law, and if we do not fulfill the law we can have no pretension to the kingdom of Heaven. Let us therefore determine henceforward to love the Lord our God and him alone. By doing so we shall not only secure what may be necessary for this life, as Christ Jesus assures us, but likewise what is of infinitely more consequence---what is capable of making ample amends for any necessity we may labour under in this world,---the joys and glory of the kingdom of Heaven. *Amen.*

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

WHAT was it that moved to pity and compassion our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, at the sight of the funeral procession, mentioned in the Gospel of this day? Was it barely the excessive grief of a disconsolate mother and widow, bewailing the loss of an only son? No, Christians; a consideration of this kind were unworthy the attention, unworthy the commiseration of Christ Jesus. What seemed an object of pity to him, was, the imperfection he discovered in the grief and sorrows of this afflicted parent: too great an attachment to the person of an only son; a visible want of submission to the wise-disposing decrees of Providence; and, likewise, a want of faith, which made her consider death purely in a natural light, without any regard to futurity or the life to come. This is the only thing that could make that widow and parent appear worthy of compassion in the eyes of Christ Jesus. But are not the same imperfections discernible in the greater part of the Christians of our days? How few are there who look upon death in the light of religion, either with regard to themselves or others! The weakness and blindness of man is, undoubtedly, great upon every occasion; but it never appears more so than in this particular, that is, with regard to death. The very idea of it is enough to frighten us. It is with reluctance we can think of it, nor can we speak of it but with concern. Death indeed is dreadful.—But to whom? To sinners, who place their hearts and affections on this world, and make no difficulty to transgress the divine laws upon every occasion, to procure or enjoy the pleasures or advantages of this life. To persons of this character, death must certainly be terrifying in the highest degree, because it must be unto them the ending of all the happiness of this world, and the beginning of their eternal misery.

But

But unto the just and the good---unto those who never placed their hearts or affections on this world, but always levelled their endeavours at the kingdom of God---death affords abundant matter of inward consolation and comfort, as it is to them a passage to a better life, and the commencement of everlasting happiness. It becomes, therefore, incumbent on us, Christians, to consider and reflect, seriously and frequently, on the situation of a sinner at the hour of his death, and compare it with that of a just man, and draw from thence such conclusions as may tend to the reformation of our lives and our improvement in virtue.

The consideration of death has been always looked upon, by the holy fathers and doctors of the Church, the divines and masters of a spiritual life, as the most effectual method of weaning our hearts from this world, and bending all our thoughts upon heavenly things. The frequent consideration of this subject we shall find, by experience, to be productive of the most happy effects.

The situation, then, of a sinner, at the hour of death, is undoubtedly, Christians, the most shocking and terrifying that ever was: for at that hour all things concur to awaken his fears for the past; to agitate and terrify him for the present; and to fill his soul with the liveliest apprehensions for the future.

Nothing can be more dreadful to a dying sinner than the past; as therein he sees a long and continued series of sins and iniquities; repeated transgressions, of the divine law, continual omissions of the most essential duties of religion, a constant profanation of the most sacred means of salvation---the Sacraments and Sacrifice. Therein he will see a number of years---a whole life---spent in wicked ways and worldly pursuits, a total neglect of God and the things of God. Then his conscience will tell him aloud, that his only business upon earth, was, to honour and serve the Almighty God; and by honouring and serving Almighty God, sanctify his soul; and by sanctifying his soul, prepare the way for eternal happiness: but that, instead of this, he had con-

stantly neglected the service of God, sanctifying his soul, or making the least provision for the life to come. What impression must not a prospect of this kind make upon his mind! Most certainly it will fill his soul with such fear and consternation as to make him cry out, with the sinner mentioned in Holy Writ, *My whole life has been a tissue of errors: I wearied myself in the ways of iniquity; and all that now remains, is, remorse, death, and a most dreadful expectation of the judgments of the Lord!* "Oh! how much better it were to have pursued the end of my creation---the service of God and my own salvation! Now should I be free from those cruel terrors, and blest with the inward joys that attend a Christian life, and other solid hopes of eternal happiness."

To the terrors that necessarily arise from the consciousness of a whole life being spent contrary to the views of God and in open violation of his holy laws, let us add the grief and concern the dying sinner must feel upon the point of losing every thing that was dear to him in life. For the more enjoyment a man has in the world, the more he must be attached thereunto; and the more he is attached, the more he must be grieved at quitting it. Seeing, therefore, that a sinner has the greatest attachment to the world, wherein he finds all his comfort and delight, it is plain nothing can equal the concern he must be under upon the point of being deprived of all the pleasures and advantages he enjoyed in the world. Then will he say within his own breast, as the impious King Antiochus did upon a like occasion, *O cruel death, is it thus you separate and tear me away from every thing that is pleasing and endearing to the mind or sense?* "My wife, my family, my children, my riches, my pleasures, my possessions, my life, my all? I know what I quit, but whither shall I go? I leave this world, which was to me a world of pleasure, but what shall be my fate in the world to come? Is it pleasure I am there to meet with, or eternal woe?" If he looks up towards Heaven, what does he behold? an angry God, an all-powerful God, ready to avenge upon his guilty head the manifold

fold iniquities he had been guilty of. If he fixes his eyes upon the cross, the awful and comfortable sign of our redemption, what does he perceive? the image of a God made man, and dying a most painful and ignominious death, for the salvation of mankind; whose sacred name he had constantly blasphemed, whose divine laws he had trampled on, whose excessive mercies he had constantly abused, by his presumption and obstinacy in sin. If he carries his thoughts a little further---into eternity---what object does he descry? a gulph flaming with the wrath of God, destined for the eternal abode of all the enemies of God and the guilty transgressors of his laws.

Behold truly, Christians, and conceive, if you can, any situation more dreadful than this of a sinner upon the point of death. But may not even the greatest sinner repent at the last hour? He may indeed; but the proper question is, whether he will or generally does? whether the repentance of a dying sinner be generally of such a nature as to make it agreeable unto God? Now it is the general opinion of all the doctors of the Church, it is not; that it is even quite the reverse: for true repentance necessarily implies the love of God above all things, and a sincere disposition of sacrificing our dearest interests upon earth, our fortunes and our lives, rather than violate any one material point of the law. And is this the spirit of a dying sinner? St. Austin says no. His repentance is grounded on fear alone. He fears to burn, St. Austin says, and not to sin. Were he assured there was no such place as Hell, his mind would be quite composed. So that he has no more than the bare appearance of conversion, and, consequently, dies in his sins, in disgrace with God, and the wretched victim of his eternal justice.

The situation of the just man at this last and dreadful hour, is very different, Christians, from that of the inveterate sinner. Neither the past, the present, or the time to come, can give him any great anxiety or disquietude of mind. If his memory recalls any transgressions of the divine laws, they were transgressions owing more to the frailty of human nature

than any premeditated malice ; transgressions he never erected into a principle, or continued in, but rather detested them as soon as committed, deploring them in the bitterness of his heart, and at length effaced them with tears of sorrow in the tribunal of penance. As his heart was never placed in the world, he sees the world depart without struggle or concern. As he always desired the kingdom of God should come, he beholds that kingdom approach with comfort and delight. Frequently he wishes, with St. Paul, to see his exile abridged, his earthly frame dissolved, and his soul at liberty to fly to the enjoyment of his God. Although he fears the judgment of the Lord and his inflexible justice, he hopes still more in his infinite mercies. For be pleased to observe, that hope is a divine virtue, and a particular gift of God, which he never fails to bestow upon the just at their last hour ; because the exercise of this virtue becomes then more necessary than ever. It is therefore at the last hour that the Almighty God enlivens the hopes of a just man, and raises all his expectations to Heaven, in and through the merits of Christ Jesus ; and thereby banishes that fear, that anxiety, that horror, which is unto a dying sinner an anticipation of the everlasting torments of Hell.

Thus the just man dies, free from disquiet, full of hope in the merits of Christ Jesus, in peace with himself, in peace with mankind, in peace with his God. *Happy are those*, the Apostle says, *that die in the Lord*. But which of these shall be our own fate ? shall we die the death of the just, or the sinner ? One thing is certain, that people generally die as they live : Those that lead a just and virtuous life, die the death of the virtuous and just ; and those that lead a sinful life, die the death of sinners---miserable beyond expression. If, therefore, you mean to die as the just do, you must live as they do : that is, you must die to the world, disengage your hearts from every unlawful pleasure, every unlawful interest or advantage of this world.—You must likewise die to your passions, or sinful appetites ; and live to God, by observing faithfully his holy laws.

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If you do this, the Almighty God will raise you up at the last day, not to a mortal or perishable life, as he did the widow's son in the Gospel this day, but to immortal life, a life which is never to have an end, and to be crowned with eternal felicity in the kingdom of Heaven. *Amen.*

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

WE are informed, Christians, by this day's Gospel, that our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ having entered the house of a certain prince of the Pharisees, to eat bread, on the Sabbath-day; he there met a man ill of the dropfy; upon which our Saviour asked the Pharisees, *was it lawful to heal on the Sabbath-day?* But they held their peace. Our Saviour then *took hold of the sick man, healed him, and sent him away*; then addressing the Pharisees, he said, *which of you, should his ox or his ass fall into a pit, will not presently draw him out on the Sabbath-day?* Our Saviour knowing perfectly well the malicious intentions of the Pharisees, who watched him, and only wanted an opportunity of censuring his conduct, he was resolved to prevent any attempt of the kind, by shewing what they themselves would do, in a case of necessity, wherein their temporal interests alone were concerned, on the Sabbath-day; whence it was easy to conclude, that if they deemed it lawful to withdraw their ox or their ass out of a pit on the Sabbath-day, it must be extremely lawful, and no way censurable, to restore a sick man, one of the Children of Israel, to health, even on the Sabbath-day. However, upon the whole, it appears how strictly observant the Jews were, in general, of the Sabbath-day; nor was this any way surprising, since the observance of the Sabbath was one of the material points of the Law, and enforced under the severest penalties. The Sabbath is a subject, Christians, of

the most weighty consideration, to examine its obligation and the manner of fulfilling it, and afterwards to behold some of its abuses.

Remember to keep holy the Sabbath-day, was one of the commands delivered to Moses by the mouth of God, amidst fire and thunder, upon Mount Sinai; *all servile work thou shalt not do therein*; and the punishment inflicted by the law on transgressors of this command, was no less than death. For the Lord says, in the 31st chap. of Deut. *The seventh day shall be holy unto you: 'tis the sabbath and repose of the Lord: he that shall work thereon shall be put to death.* The Sabbath was so strictly and religiously observed by the Jews, that it was not lawful even to gather the manna that day in the desert. This Sabbath, which was so religiously kept, was instituted in honour and memory of the creation, and, consequently, of all the blessings that are derived from the creation unto mankind: for the Scripture tells us, that *the Almighty, after creating the Heavens and the Earth, and all they contain, during six days, rested on the seventh day, and sanctified it.* It was further instituted as a memorial of the alliance Almighty God had made with his chosen people: for the Lord says, *Let the Children of Israel keep the Sabbath, and solemnize it, from generation to generation: 'tis an everlasting covenant between me and the Children of Israel, and a sign that shall last for ever.*---Exod. 31. The Sabbath-day, or day of rest (for the word sabbath signifies rest), was kept on Saturday among the Jews; but amongst us, Christians, it is kept on the following day, or Sunday, from the appointment of the Apostles, who thought proper to solemnize this day, in preference to the Jewish Sabbath, 1st, in honour of the resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who on that day arose from the dead; and, 2dly, in memory and in honour of the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles, which happened on a Sunday. St. Luke tells us, in the Acts of the Apostles, that the primitive Christians used to meet on the first day after the Sabbath, to partake of the Holy Eucharist, and assist at the dissertations of St. Paul upon religious subjects;

subjects; so that you see, Christians, that the Sunday was solemnized by the Apostles and their immediate disciples. Although the Sabbath has been transferred in the New Law, yet the obligations are the same as in the Old Law; that is, we are obliged in the New Law to refrain from all servile work on this day, and keep it holy unto the Lord. This obligation is also grounded on the light of reason, and the very first dictates of the law of nature, which point out to every man, within his own breast, that, as a dependant creature, he is bound to acknowledge, venerate, and adore the supreme power of his Maker, and the many favours he received from his bountiful hand. The light of reason, it is true, doth not point out the time of paying these indispensable duties of religion unto the Almighty God: No: this it leaves undetermined. Wherefore the Almighty was pleased, in the Old Law, to fix and determine a certain time for that purpose: so that the command of keeping holy the Sabbath-day, is no more than an outward determination of the inward law of nature.

The manner of keeping holy, or sanctifying this day unto the Lord, is, 1st, By refraining from all servile work. *Six days shalt thou labour, and work, and do all that thou hast to do, saith the Lord; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God, thou shalt not do any work therein.* 2^d, By consecrating this day, in a most particular manner, to the exercise of religion. What can be more just or reasonable, Christians, than, after spending six days in the care of worldly business and affairs, to employ one day in the week to the service of the Almighty God? For this purpose, the Church of Christ commands all the faithful in general to assist every Sunday at the Sacrifice of the Altar; because this is the most perfect worship we can pay the Almighty God. Besides, the Church requires, though not so rigorously, that the faithful assist, on the Lord's day, at the public prayers and instructions which are offered up and delivered publicly on this day, more than any other of the week, all over the Christian world. Should we omit assisting at the Sacrifice of the Altar on the Lord's

day, we commit a grievous sin; because we not only refuse paying unto the Almighty God, the worship and adoration due to him; but likewise disobey a particular command of the Church. Should we also neglect the public prayers and instructions of this day, we deprive ourselves of a great many graces and spiritual blessings: inasmuch as it cannot be questioned, but that the Almighty is more inclined to shew mercy unto his people, when he sees them assembled in his name, than upon any other less important occasion.

Nevertheless, Christians, can any thing be more common, to the eternal shame of Christianity, than to see the Lord's day prophaned in the most criminal and sacrilegious manner? How many violate and abuse this sacred day, by servile works and worldly occupations? How many refuse to sanctify it, by the commanded works of religion? How many convert it into a day of dissipation; a day of rioting and dissolution? Such as behave somewhat like Christians the rest of the week, frequently behave like Pagans, and worse than Pagans, on the Lord's day, by spending it in idleness, drunkenness and debauchery. And in this particular (I say it Christians, with the utmost sorrow and confusion) many of our Catholics surpass in this country, the rest of mankind; as they seem to pay less regard to the Lord's day, than any other set of people whatsoever. One should really think, they only wish to see the days allotted for labour at an end, to be more at liberty to insult the Almighty God, by prophaning the day he was pleased to appoint most particularly for his own service and worship. Is there hardly a tradesman, that does not employ the Lord's day, in squandering away in drunkenness and debauchery, the greater part of what he had earned by his labour the foregoing week? Now a conduct of this kind plainly implies three grievous sins and transgressions. Three grievous sins; mind this. The first is a sin of intemperance; the second a sin of injustice towards his wife and children, whom he is in conscience obliged to provide for, but whom he often deprives by his dissipation, of their necessary



ry subsistence: the third a sin of impiety towards God, in not sanctifying the day he hath appointed for his own honor and worship. Others that are occupied in business, make no difficulty in buying and selling on the Lord's day, as much as any other day in the week; which is a manifest violation of the Sabbath. Even those that seem to possess more of the fear of God than others, are frequently guilty of violating the Sabbath, though not in so flagrant a manner: for although they assist at the sacrifice of the altar, it is without a spirit of attention, a spirit of adoration, a spirit of religion; it is with the utmost dissipation and distraction. How criminal must it not be, to behave in this manner; and what heavy punishments must it not draw down from Heaven, upon their guilty heads?

In order therefore to reclaim, let every one pay a due regard to the Lord's day, not only by refraining from all servile works; but likewise by employing it in the exercise of religion, the worship of God, deploring the many sins and transgressions of the week, and forming strong and inviolable resolutions of amendment for the time to come. Let every Christian parent see, that their children apply particularly on the Lord's day to prayer and reading such books of piety, as are capable of informing their minds, and improving their morals, in the essential duties of Religion. In a word, let every Master and Mistress see, that their servants and every individual in their care, apply on the Lord's day, to the worship of God and the sanctification of their souls. By this means after celebrating upon earth the rest of the Lord, in a spirit of religion, you will certainly be admitted one day into the mansions of eternal rest, along with the blessed in the kingdom of Heaven. *Amen.*

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER
PENTECOST.

AS the love of God, Christians, is the very first command or precept of the law, according to the declaration of Christ Jesus, it is a matter of the first consequence to us to know, 1st, How far this Divine Law is necessary towards salvation, and 2d, What it consists in.

It is a settled point of Christian morality, that any man that hath not the love of God, can have no pretensions to the kingdom of Heaven. For the kingdom of Heaven is a reward which Almighty God has promised, through Christ Jesus, to all those who fulfill his law. Now, as it is the first and greatest command of the law, to love God with all our hearts, with all our souls, and with all our might; it is plain if any man doth not love God, he falls short in the accomplishment of the law, and consequently can have no right to the reward of eternal happiness. For this reason the Apostle says, *Any man that doth not love God, abideth in death*: that is, he is dead to the grace of God, dead to the rewards of God, dead to all hopes of everlasting happiness, and doomed, in a word, to everlasting death. Nothing, therefore, can be more indispensable towards salvation, than the love of God, as appears not only from what St. Paul has said, but more especially from the positive command of Christ Jesus, in the Gospel this day, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul, and with thy whole might*: thou shalt love him, in preference to, and beyond any thing in Heaven or on Earth—beyond wealth, or power or pleasure—love him for his own sake alone, on account of his adorable perfections, and on account of the unspeakable blessings he has poured forth on mankind in general, and each one of you in particular. Thus are we obliged to love the Lord, with all the powers of our souls, and all the faculties of our bodies. Miserable, indeed, must be
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our unhappy nature, to require a precept to love you, O my God, who art the fountain of love, whose love constitutes the joy of the blessed! But let us examine, Christians, how far we have discharged this duty hitherto. Can we with any truth or sincerity say, that we have hitherto loved the Almighty God, or that we love him even at present above all things? I fear very much there is nothing we have been so deficient in. Instead of loving God as we ought to have done, is it not the world—its advantages, its pleasures, its follies, its vanities, we have loved? and loved to distraction? Can any thing be more criminal, than to be continually breaking and infringing the first and greatest precept of the law? Any thing more unreasonable than to be continually prostituting to vile and perishable creatures, the love and affection due to the great God alone? We are all created for no other end, than to love and serve the Almighty God, from whom alone we received all that we possess, all that we are. From God alone we can receive grace in this life, and eternal happiness in the next; and yet we have loved every thing besides this God. It remains, therefore, Christians, that we humble ourselves in the presence of this almighty good and amiable God; acknowledge our past errors, deplore them in the bitterness of our souls, and begin at length to turn all our affections towards that Almighty Being, in whom they should have been invariably centered and fixed. Did you but conceive the virtue and excellence of the love of God, you certainly would use all your endeavours to attain it. One act of the love of God above all things is so excellent, Divines say, and the Doctors of the Church, that it is capable of blotting out the greatest sins, and consequently of reconciling the greatest sinners unto the Lord. This wonderful effect of divine love, is grounded on these words of our Saviour, *If any one love me, he shall be loved by my Father, and we will both come and dwell in him.* Whoever, therefore, loves God, must be loved by him, and consequently must appear both righteous and agreeable in his eyes, which could not be the case if the love of God did not efface all his sins and transgressions.

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From a knowledge of these effects, divines and masters of a spiritual life are constantly advising and exhorting the faithful, to excite as many acts of the love of God as they possibly can, in hopes one or other of them may be perfect; for if any one of them should prove perfect, they are infallibly justified thereby.

This love which thus justifies the greatest sinners in the eyes of God, consists of two parts—the love of preference, and the love of benevolence or complacency.

The love of preference consists in loving God above all things, and preferring him before all creatures in Heaven or Earth. For as God is infinitely great and good, he requires that we love him in a manner worthy his infinite greatness and goodness; this we can never do, but by loving him more than the whole world besides. If, therefore, Christians, you truly love God, you must love him, as I have said, beyond all the honors, riches, or pleasures of this life—beyond all his works—beyond life itself. For our Saviour says in the Gospel, *If any one will love father or mother, brother or sister, nay, his very life more than me, he is not worthy to be called my disciple.* But when have we an opportunity of testifying this love of preference unto the Almighty God? As often as the observation of his law or commandments comes in question. For our Saviour says in the Gospel, *He that loveth me, is he that keepeth my commandments;* and again, *if any one will love me, he will keep my commandments.* Therefore, Christians, keeping the commandments and fulfilling the law, is the distinguishing mark and characteristic of the love of preference we owe unto the Almighty God. If you would fain know whether you possess the love of God required by Christ, or not, see how you behave with regard to the law: for instance, an opportunity offers of increasing vastly your fortune; but the means are sinful: if you love God above all things, as you are bound to do, you will renounce the prospect of gain, and prefer the fidelity you owe to God, to all the advantages of this world. From your situation in life you may frequently fall into company
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that are disposed to run into excess, or entertain themselves with lewd subjects or obscene discourses; then if you love God above all things, as you are obliged to do, you will refuse complying with their humour, and prefer the fidelity you owe to God, to the criminal ways and complaisance of this world. A man has injured you severely, it is in your power to revenge yourself upon him in the compleatest manner, if you love God above all things, as Christ Jesus directs you to do; you will prefer his love and the fidelity you owe him and his command, to the revenge you have it in your power to obtain. In a word, were your life at stake, and that it were in your power to preserve it, by one single mortal sin, you are obliged, from the love of preference you owe the Almighty God, to lay down your very life, rather than transgress his holy laws. This is what St. Paul signifies, when he *desires the whole creation to extinguish the love of God within him*: this is what he sets forth, when he assures us, that *no hardships or sufferings, no danger or persecution, nor even death with all its terrors, should ever separate him from the love of Christ*. Where, O! where, Christians, are these heroic but necessary sentiments to be found? Who is the man, whose conduct shews that he has the love of God in his heart? One thing is most certain in the principles of religion, that any man, who has not the love of God in him, that love of preference, which sets the Almighty God, and the fidelity due to his laws, above all the considerations of this world, has no share in Christ; but on the contrary, lives every moment of his life before God, in a state of eternal reprobation.

Besides this love of preference, there is another love we are obliged to have for Almighty God, which is a love of benevolence or complacency; that is, we are obliged not only to love God above all things, but likewise for his own sake with a pure and disinterested love. The divine Law commands and orders us to love God with our whole heart, with our whole souls, with our whole mind. Therefore, as thoughts and affections can reach, dwell upon, and adhere to the
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infinite perfections of the Almighty God, considered purely in themselves, it follows we are obliged to do it in consequence of the Law. But when, and how often? This is one of the nicest points of our holy religion, the clearing up of which has exercised the talents of the most learned divines in Europe, for upwards of a century. This much at least may be depended on, 1st, That we are obliged in conscience to produce acts of this pure and disinterested love, immediately after our attaining to the use of reason, 2d, That we are obliged to produce them frequently in the course of life; and, 3d, That we are most particularly obliged to produce an act of pure and disinterested love at the hour of our death. It is lawful, it must be owned, to love God on account of the happiness he has prepared for us in the life to come: for a devout soul may serve God, like King David, on account of the reward, but that is only a secondary motive. If it glances at itself and wishes its own happiness, it wishes still more the glory and the accomplishment of God's holy will. It does not exclude its own interest; it cannot even exclude it, because it places its happiness in the possession of God, its beloved object; but it does not establish its principal end in this possession, inasmuch as it renders itself happy. It establishes it in the glory which results from it to God, and in his good pleasure which is every thing to it. To conclude, let the obligation dwell strong in your minds, of making frequent and fervent acts of divine love, at least every day, in the morning and at night. It is not necessary they should be long or learned. You may say with King David, *I love you, O my God! my strength and my refuge*: "I love you from my heart, not because you can make me happy or miserable, but because thou art my God and my all." Or with the great St. Augustin, "Too late I began to love you, O my God! but now that I know you, I know my obligation, I love you with all my heart, and will love you evermore." If we do, the Lord God will love us, and not only love but shew us one day how much he loves us, in the mansions of his immortal kingdom.

Amen.

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE scribes mentioned in this day's Gospel, (St. Math. 9.) were writers or notaries among the Jews. Of these some were employed in civil matters alone, such as registering marriage contracts, and other public deeds: Others among them were employed in spiritual occupations, such as the care of preserving the holy books or scriptures and expounding them unto the people. The Scribes as well as the Pharisees, had often been reproached by our Saviour for their hypocrisy, and for merely adhering to the letter and not entering into the spirit of the Laws they expounded. They professed the minutest nicety in their external observances, and affected to be scandalized at the most innocent actions of Jesus Christ. They beheld with pain the success that attended his preaching, and watched every opportunity that seemed favourable to their invidious designs to slander his reputation and destroy his credit amongst the people. Every word, every action of his they observed, not to partake of the heavenly doctrine that flowed from all his words and actions, but to catch him at some unwary moment and take occasion from thence to cry down his mission. Some of the Scribes and Pharisees being present at Capharnaum, when Christ Jesus said to the paralytic, mentioned in the Gospel of this day, *Thy sins are forgiven thee*, were greatly scandalized thereat, and secretly construed these words into blasphemy, as expressing a power in man, which belonged solely to God. Wherefore Jesus Christ, to show them that he was both God and man, and that their most secret thoughts were as perfectly known to him, as if they had been declared by word of mouth, suddenly asked them, if it were not as easy for him to tell the paralytic that his sins were forgiven him as to bid him rise from his bed and walk. And to convince them that he had the power

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er of doing both the one and the other, he said to the paralytic: *Rise, take up thy bed and walk.* The paralytic rose, and the spectators full of admiration at the miracle returned thanks to God, who had given such power to man. It is true indeed that God alone hath power *of himself* to forgive sins, but Christ Jesus, who is both God and man, could, and did communicate this power of forgiving sins, *in his name* and by *his authority*, to his Delegates in the sacred ministry. We have Christ's own words for it, St. John 20. 23. *Whose sins, you shall forgive, they are forgiven them.* How great, my brethren, must the astonishment and confusion of the Scribes and Pharisees have been, when they beheld the very person they just now accused of blasphemy, curing the sick man of his palsy, and restoring him to the most perfect health. Then they perceived, or might have perceived, that Christ Jesus had an undoubted power of remitting sin, and consequently must have been the Redeemer, promised unto Israel; since he wrought before their eyes the most surprising miracles in confirmation of his divine authority and mission. But those carnal men, led away by the objects of sense, could not discover in the meek and humble Jesus, that Messiah whom they expected as a mighty warrior seated on the throne of David. In like manner, Christians, there are some persons, so blinded by their obstinacy and malice, as not to discern the clearest light of Heaven: no evidence will remove their obstinacy; no conviction satisfy their malice. To them we may apply the words of the Royal Prophet, *they have eyes and see not, ears and hear not.* However the croud who were looking on, and whose hearts were not influenced, or overruled by any inordinate passion, took immediate notice of the miracle, *and gave glory unto God, who had given such power unto men.* Amidst the general acclamations of the croud, what must have been the sentiments of the sick man himself, who after being dead in some measure for many years, and confined to a bed of sufferings, destitute of strength, motion, or consolation, was in one single moment restored to life and vigour, by Christ Jesus, so as to be able to walk
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with liberty, and enjoy all the blessings and heart-felt joys of the most confirmed health? In what transports must he have expressed his gratitude to his divine deliverer?

This is the substance of the Gospel of this day; but in the moral resulting from it, the holy Fathers and Doctors of the Church, discover a genuine picture of a person languishing in a state of mortal sin, deprived of the grace and friendship of God. As the palsy not only deprives man of the use of his limbs, but moreover reduces him to the most miserable state of infirmity and weakness, unable to help himself or scarce call for help to others; so sin strips us of spiritual health and reduces us to a situation of all others, the most miserable. The conduct of this sick man, contains a fine lesson for the imitation of Christians, who lose the grace of God by sin, to apply to Christ Jesus in the sacrament of penance for a cure: but as I mean to treat that important subject more fully hereafter, for the present I shall say but a few words, in pointing your attention to the desire—the fervent, animated, warm desire which this paralytic felt of being restored to health, and the means employed to attain that end. Totally deprived of all bodily action by his infirmities, he knew and he felt his miseries. Observe here the foundation of his cure, in the knowledge of his complaints. The knowledge of our spiritual infirmities, constitutes also the foundation of our cure, and is the first striking inference we are to draw from the Gospel of this day. The second is equally obvious and striking. In vain had the sick man tried all the power of medicine and all the aid of art. Art and medicine were lost in the magnitude of his complaint, and his cure was reserved for the manifestation of the glory of God and the divinity of his adorable son Christ Jesus our Lord. Our Saviour returning to Capharnaum where the sick man lived, the fame of his miracles having gone before him, this sick man from an ardent desire of health and strong faith in the power and charity of our

our Lord, caused himself to be brought in his litter or bed to the house where Christ Jesus then was: This desire of a cure forms the second grand point worthy your observation. Observe how vehement it must be, and how ingenious in striking out new and unheard of contrivances. He cannot go, and therefore orders himself to be carried, bed and all, to the great master of life and death. When he arrived at the house, the croud obstructed all entrance by the door. This disappointment far from checking his ardor, only suggested new contrivances: At the other end of the house, approaches were made to the roof: the roof was uncovered, and the paralytic was hoisted up and let down into the room before our blessed Saviour's feet. The sick man did not reflect that if he fell, he would lose his life, and perhaps kill others. No: his desires were too vehement for delay, and his faith too strong to behold danger. Those fervent desires, this strong faith, form the next grand object for your example and imitation. Let them animate you truly and sincerely, and I promise unto you on the part of almighty God, the same benefits the sick man received—immediate and perfect health: *arise, take up thy bed and go into thy house.*

What happened in those days at Capharnaum, daily happens among Christians in our days. We become spiritually sick and disabled from all the functions of spiritual life, as often as we commit any grievous sin. What the palsy is to the body, sin is to the soul. It plants a thorn in the mind, the thorn of conscience, and happy are they who feel its stings, as the paralytic man did his complaints. To feel and know the evil of sin, which of all evils is the greatest, generally leads the way to a deliverance from it, by raising such fervent and effectual desires as I have been just speaking of; for no man can feel the pressure of great weight or the anguish of great pain, without wishing to be delivered therefrom: nor the want of a great good without desiring the possession thereof. Happy I say are all those who pursue and expel the evil of sin which oppresses their

their souls with the same fervour they do the sensible evils of this world. But unhappily! there are but few who imitate the conduct of the sick man in the Gospel, who feel unhappy and miserable under the pressure of sin, and the loss of God's grace, as he did under the pressure of infirmity and the loss of health. The power of causing that miracle of grace—the spiritual resurrection from sin to the life of virtue, is always to be found in the church established by Christ Jesus, which power he specially confirmed unto her on the day of his glorious resurrection. All you therefore Christians, who feel oppressed by sin, come and partake of the remedy which the ministers of Christ have deposited in their hands for your benefit. Do not be led astray, nor kept back by a fatal insensibility. Remove the veil which the false seductions of the world draw over your sins. Seek the Lord and return to him whilst he may be found—whilst it is yet day, lest night come on when no man can work. The eternal word of God speaks to you from the Gospel and tenderly invites you to ease and happiness, *all you that are weary and oppressed, come to me.* Throw your cares and your burthens on the Lord: throw your sins at his feet, and he will cover them by the drops which fell from the cross. But beware of neglecting this call of his mercy. Beware, lest it may be the last call which Christ Jesus may give you; for great as he is in mercy, equally great is he to execute justice without mercy upon those who reject his tender calls and invitations.

The Church this day invites you all by the example of the sick man to apply to Christ Jesus in the tribunal of penance for a cure for all your spiritual infirmities. Sinners oppressed and borne down by their crimes, and not Saints, he invites thither, because to them he wishes to shew the riches of his mercies. Suffering on a bed of pain and languishing in a palsy, the sick man, is brought to Christ Jesus, and by one word of his divine power, is restored to health. Let every one therefore who labours under a paralytic disorder of the Soul, that is, a habitual state of sin, go and present himself before the Lord, who is the
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divine, all-powerful physician of the Soul. In his hands are life and death. One or either he can dispense and dispose of, at will: for he is the lamb who taketh away the sins of the world. Truly he says of himself, *I am the resurrection and the life*: this life he desires to impart; go therefore and present yourselves frequently before him, with an inward sense, of your misery, and sincere sorrow for your sins, with an earnest desire of amendment and a firm purpose of sinning no more. If you do this, you certainly will perceive within yourselves, by the inward inspirations of divine grace, the pleasing and comfortable word which Christ Jesus said unto the sick man, *arise*, from the slavery of sin to the liberty of the Children of God. Arise, from the lethargy and insensibility you were in, and awake to justice, to the spirit and activity of life. Arise come forth from the shades of death, and walk hereafter in the full blaze of a godly life and the shining hopes of eternal happiness in the kingdom of Heaven. *Amen.*

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

NOTHING can be more instructive, Christians, or more improving, than the parable mentioned in the Gospel of this day, as it contains in reality an abridgment of religion, the merciful views of God with regard to mankind, the means he employs to compass his designs, the perverseness of man in refusing to comply with his bountiful intentions, and, lastly, the dreadful punishments he inflicts on all those who prove disobedient or refractory to his will.

The marriage feast mentioned in the Gospel is a figure, the holy Fathers say, of the kingdom of Heaven. The Being that prepared it is Christ Jesus, the eternal, co-eternal God, by whom, and through whom alone, mankind can attain eternal happiness.

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Those that are called to the marriage feast—all the nations upon the earth, who are invited to the kingdom of Heaven, by believing in Christ and fulfilling his holy laws. The servants that were employed in calling them, are the Prophets, the Apostles—in a word, the Ministers of Christ, who are particularly authorised and commissioned to preach the faith of Christ, and publish to the world the eternal happiness which is to be obtained in his name, that is, through the merits of his passion and the observance of his holy laws. Amongst those who were called to the marriage feast, many refused to come: hereby are meant those who refuse believing in Christ and submitting to his laws; such were the Jews, in the first place—and next, all those who, after hearing, receiving, and professing the saving faith of Christ, do not live agreeably thereto. In the room of those who refused to come after being invited, others were substituted: thus the Gentiles have been brought in and called to the faith of Christ, after the Jews were rejected and reproved for their obstinacy and malice. Christ Jesus declares, in the Gospel, that *he was particularly sent by his Heavenly Father to those that had gone astray out of the House of Israel.* The Jews were the Children of the Promise, being the posterity of Abraham, to whom the promises were made, that God would take him and his descendants under his protection, and that the Messiah should be born of his race: the faith was therefore first preached unto them. But this great and inestimable blessing being rejected by the Jews, it was transferred unto the nations, or Gentiles; so that the call of the Nations, or their conversion, was grounded on the reprobation of the Jews. *The Jews, St. Paul says, were the natural olive tree, and the Nations the wild olive. But the wild olive has been grafted on the former, the Apostle says, by a wonderful effect of the bounty and mercy of God;* or, in other words, we have been in reality substituted in the place of those who refused to come to the marriage feast.

The first thing, therefore, Christians, that we should do upon the present occasion, is, to consider
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that each of us in particular has been called, by a particular blessing, to the kingdom of Heaven; of which the marriage feast this day is a genuine and lively picture. But what return have we made Almighty God for so inestimable a favour? Have we ever mentioned it in the presence of the Lord? Ever made it the subject of our praise or thanksgiving? The Almighty God was under no necessity or obligation of enlightening us with the light of Christ, and thereby informing us of the eternal happiness that is reserved in the life to come for all those who believe in Christ and fulfil his holy laws.—No: He could have left us, like thousands of others, in darkness, error, and infidelity, to the very last moment of our lives; but *he has been most graciously and most mercifully pleased to transfer us from darkness, St. Peter says, to the admirable light of the Gospel*, which is the greatest of blessings. How much happier is our situation than that of nations born in idolatry, who never heard, at least many of them, of the all-saving name of Christ. From the ignorance they are born in, unacquainted as they are with the light of faith, the way to Heaven, and destitute of the many powerful graces, which are conferred by the Holy Sacraments, very slender indeed are their prospects of attaining to life everlasting. Such must have been our condition, if Almighty God, out of his pure mercy, had not granted us the light of faith, even from our infancy. *Let us, therefore, ever bless and magnify the name of the Lord, who has dealt with us more mercifully, as the Prophet says, than with other nations. Heaven and earth praise ye the Lord: Let all the works of the Lord praise the Lord. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and let all that is within me praise his holy name.*

Many of those who were called to the marriage feast, refused to go, on account of their worldly affairs: so amongst those that are called to the kingdom of Heaven, there are many that refuse the heavenly call or invitation. For although they know that Heaven is the reward, the great and glorious reward, promised to all those that shall serve the
 Almighty

Almighty God and keep his commandments; yet the love of the world is so prevalent in their hearts, as to occupy and absorb all their time, all their thoughts and affections. *One is taken up, the Gospel says, with farming; another with merchandise;* some with one thing, some with another: all are too busy to answer the call of God. Their worldly cares and occupations render them deaf to the divine call and invitation; deaf to the ministers of the Gospel, who, on the part of Christ Jesus, invite you all to the marriage feast—invite you to do and perform what is requisite in order to attain to the kingdom of Heaven. But, Christians, can any thing be more silly, more stupid, or more criminal, than to prefer the calls of momentary, passing interest, to the voice of Heaven; the frail and perishable riches of this world, to the pure, full, and everlasting joys of the kingdom of Heaven? The Almighty God invites us, in the Gospel this day, and also by his Apostles and Pastors, to prefer his pure and lasting joys to the perishable joys of this world. The condition on which they are to be obtained, is, the observance of his holy laws. He grants us his grace in abundance, to enable us to perform this necessary condition, yet there are thousands so blind to their interest as to reject the generous and bountiful offers of Almighty God, and prefer the empty and short-lived enjoyments of this world to all the treasures of the kingdom of Heaven. Remember what Christ says, and let it sink deep in your souls, *what will it avail a man to gain the whole world if he should lose his soul?* the loss and perdition of which must be the inevitable consequence of not answering the divine call—of not doing and fulfilling what God requires at our hands, in order to attain life everlasting. How was it the great and powerful king, mentioned in this day's Gospel, behaved towards a man who went to the nuptial feast without the nuptial robe? *He ordered him to be seized upon by his servants, to have his hands and feet bound, and then cast into outward darkness, where there shall be eternal weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

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Thus it is every one will be treated who presents himself at the tribunal of God without the bright ornament of grace and good works, which alone can entitle him to a seat at the marriage feast—the possession of the kingdom of Heaven. Sooner or later we are all to appear in turn before this dread tribunal of God; but in what condition? Shall it be by day or by night? in winter or summer? this year or the next? to-day or to-morrow? Shall it be with or without the nuptial robe? upon that your eternal lot depends;—in grace or favour with God?—entitled to the joys and glory of Heaven, or doomed miserable victims to the everlasting torments of Hell? One thing is certain, that nothing but virtue, and justice, and godliness can gain admittance to the kingdom of Heaven. *Many are called, Christ says, but few are chosen.* We are all called, inasmuch as we have been baptized and instructed in the faith of Christ; but are we of the number of the chosen few? This we cannot know. But we know with the utmost certainty, that it is in the power of every one of you to be of the number of the chosen: How? *by making good your vocation, as St. Peter says, to the faith of Christ, by good works.* For none but the chosen are admitted to the kingdom of God; and none are admitted to the kingdom of God, but such as fulfil the law; and none but those who fulfil the law are, certainly, of the number of the chosen.

If, therefore, after being called to the faith of Christ, we fulfil his holy law; that is, if we believe all that he has revealed, and practise all he has enjoined---there is no doubt but we will be of the number of the chosen, and, consequently, admitted one day to share in that bliss, whereof the marriage feast this day is but a slight figure—the joys and glory of the kingdom of Heaven. *Amen.*

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

GALILEE was a little province contiguous to Judea, which gave our blessed Lord and Redeemer an opportunity of making frequent incursions into it. During one of these incursions, a petty king or nobleman, whose son lay ill at Capharnaum, upon the point of death, applied to our Saviour to go down along with him and cure his son. Having heard the wonderful things our Saviour had already done in Judea, he doubted not but he could restore his son to life, even in the dying state he was in; and if he did, he would be satisfied within himself of his divine mission and authority. He was also confident his request would be granted, from the rank and consequence he held in the country, being a petty king. But our Saviour who paid no respect to persons, nor regarded human distinctions, instead of granting readily his request as he expected, rebuked him on the contrary, saying, *Ye do not believe, except ye see signs and prodigies.* The nobleman, however, renewed his request with great humility, calling our Saviour *Lord and Master*, and entreating him to go down along with him, before his son would die. On seeing this, our Saviour was pleased to comply in part with his request, by miraculously curing his son, but would not go down along with him in order to lower the high opinion this king had of his own greatness or distinction, or to cure a secret diffidence he seemed to entertain of the power of Christ. For, by insisting so strenuously our Saviour should go, one would imagine he suspected Christ Jesus could not cure his son, unless he was present. But our Saviour to shew him that his power was not confined to time or place, desired him go back to his house, assuring him at the same time, that his son was alive, and would live. The nobleman relied upon his word, and soon learned from his servants that the fever had quitted his son at seven o'clock the foregoing day, which was the very hour he was discoursing

about him with Christ Jesus. It is easy to conceive what an impression such agreeable news must have made on the heart of this nobleman. The Gospel tells us, that thereupon he believed in Christ, and his whole family along with him. This was a most happy circumstance indeed, by which he obtained not only the recovery of his son, the delight and comfort of the father, and in all appearance the rising hopes of his family, but likewise the true faith of Christ, which is the ground-work and foundation of eternal happiness. Whatever pleasure he received from the recovery of his son, could only be limited in extent, but believing in Christ could, and in all appearance did make him eternally happy in Heaven.

Is there any one, Christians, but would wish most sincerely to have been in the place of this nobleman? But be pleased to observe, that the great blessing which that nobleman received in a miraculous manner, I mean faith in Christ, has been bestowed on each of us at baptism in our infancy. Yet where is the person that ever reflects upon this inestimable favor, with the gratitude and thanksgiving it deserves? How few are there that take any pains to know their faith, or the advantages that attend it? And yet an inquiry into our faith, and a knowledge of the advantages arising from it, are of the last consequence and importance.

Faith is a gift of God, by which we believe all that he has revealed unto his Church, upon the infallible authority of his own word. It is a gift—because no man can have faith from himself, or believe without a particular grace from Heaven. *Faith*, St. Paul says, *is by hearing*. And again, *how will they believe, if what they are to believe be not preached unto them? You are justified by faith, and this is not of you, but from the grace of God*. This grace the Almighty God grants unto some, while he refuses it unto others. For all nations have not as yet been enlightened with the faith of Christ, because some regions are yet supposed to be unexplored. In all known countries faith has been spread by the preaching of the Gospel, but by the terrible judgments of God removed from some. The Almighty is master of his gifts, and no one has any right to bring him to an account for such distribution as he thinks proper

proper to make of his favours. It is this particular grace, which we receive first in our baptism, that enables us to believe all that God has revealed unto his Church, and to believe it upon the sole authority of his word. Here then you have both the object and the motive of our faith. The object of our faith are all the things which God has revealed in the Old and New Law. In the Old Law God spoke with man, and afterwards by Moses and the Prophets; in the New Law by the mouth of Christ Jesus himself, and his Apostles. What therefore, we are to believe, is what God has revealed, and this is contained chiefly in the Old and New Testament. The motive of our faith, or the reason why we believe those things is the authority—the infallible word and authority of Christ; or because God, the infallible truth, who neither can deceive us, or be himself deceived, has revealed the points of our faith. It follows hence, we are to believe the points of our faith with the greatest firmness of mind, without the least doubt or hesitation, because they are grounded on the infallible word of God. *If we believe the testimony of man, St. John says, how much more should we believe the testimony of a God.* It follows also, that it must be a great sin, a sin against faith, to disbelieve or even doubt of any one point of revelation, because that is calling in question the truth and veracity of God who revealed it. Nevertheless there are to be found those who, for worldly interest and advantage, have and will deny their faith: but *Christ will deny them before his Father in Heaven*: there are those that hesitate to believe some of the most material points of our faith, because they cannot comprehend them; such as the incarnation, the death and sufferings of Christ, the most holy Trinity, and others. Could reason comprehend them, they would be no longer mysteries. The question is not whether those mysteries be conceivable or not, but whether God has revealed them? If he has, they must be true; because God can reveal or say nothing but what is true, and essentially true. Now that God has revealed those things is manifest from the testimony of all ages; but especially

cially from the testimony of his unerring and infallible Church, which the Almighty has established upon Earth, to guide and conduct us in the way to Heaven. This is the nature of faith. It is a gift, a most particular gift of God, by which we firmly believe without hesitation, all that God has revealed to his Church, and that upon the strength of his own word or testimony. The value of this gift will be seen from a consideration of the advantages that attend faith.

So great are the advantages that attend faith, that St. Paul says in his Epistle to the Romans, *We are justified by faith.* From this it appears there is no justification, no appearing just and righteous in the eyes of God, without faith. It is faith, therefore, that opens the gates of Heaven, and gives us a title to the kingdom of God. Faith makes us partakers of the merits of Christ, and intitles us to the rewards he has promised all his faithful servants. *He that believeth and is baptized, says Christ, shall be saved.* On the other hand, says St. Paul, *without faith it is impossible to please God:* consequently such as have not faith, can have no title to the kingdom of Heaven; for Christ Jesus says, *he that believeth not, shall be damned.* But what faith is that which justifies before God, and intitles us to the kingdom of Heaven? Not an idle, inactive, or speculative faith; not a faith which is confined to believing alone, but a fruitful faith; a faith attended with good works, *a faith, as St. Paul says, which operates through charity.* This is the faith which justifies the soul, and enlivens all her actions. When you pray, what is it makes your prayer agreeable to God? Faith in Christ. When you fast or give alms to the poor, it is likewise your faith in Christ that renders acceptable to God, both your fasting and alms; so that faith is to good works what life is to the body—the enlivening and animating principle; and so true is this principle, that all you could do or think of, either by prayer, or fasting, or alms, or even giving up your very life as a sacrifice, can obtain no merit, can avail nothing, unless it proceeds from a spirit of faith; for you will please to observe, that our actions have nothing in themselves agreeable to God. This consideration alone should give us the greatest veneration for

for our faith, and make us value it, as an immense treasure of spiritual blessing. It should engage us likewise to produce frequently fervent acts of faith, protesting to God that we believe firmly all that he has revealed unto his Church, upon the strength of his own infallible word or testimony. Divines say, we merit more by acts of faith, than by fasting and other penitential works for years; because this virtue is so great and excellent in its nature (as it captivates and subjects unto God the noblest faculty of the soul—understanding) that it raises our actions to the highest degree of merit.

Let us, therefore, Christians, enliven our actions by a spirit of faith, offering them to God through Christ, and in union with the merits of Christ. Divines call this the interior spirit—that spirit which constitutes true and solid virtue. Without this spirit of faith you can have no more than the appearance of Christianity. Many fast and pray; but how? or why? or for what end? They never enquire. And yet without this spirit of faith in Christ, all is lost. Let us, therefore, henceforward *learn to live by faith*, as St. Paul directs; that is, enliven all our actions with a spirit of faith. For by faith the grace of God will be drawn down on you in this life, and the gates of Heaven will be open for you in the next. *Amen.*

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE tendency of the whole Gospel this day, is, to make us sensible of the obligation we are under of shewing mercy unto others. For this end, our Saviour lays before us the severe punishment inflicted on a merciless servant, who, on receiving mercy, and the greatest mercy, from his own master, would shew no mercy to his fellow servant, in an occasion of small consequence, nor remit a trifling debt.

debt, after obtaining a full release of a most considerable debt. This is the parable, or figure; and the application our Saviour makes of it is this, that our Heavenly Father will treat us in the same manner—will deliver us up to the executioners to be cast into prison, till we pay the last farthing, if we refuse shewing mercy and forgiveness unto others. This may appear a very severe injunction, as nothing is more repugnant to our nature than to forgive a grievous injury of any kind.—However, there are two considerations which are very capable of reconciling this injunction to our minds: The first is, that God commands us to forgive even the greatest injuries; and the second, that refusing to forgive is putting the Almighty God under a necessity of shewing no forgiveness, no mercy unto ourselves.

The command is laid down in the 6th chap. of St. Luke, where Christ says, *forgive*. And again, in St. Mathew, *I say unto you, love your very enemies*. This command subsisted from the foundation of the world, but by the corruption that gradually crept in among mankind, it was imagined by the Jews, in our Saviour's time, that it was lawful to hate their enemies, although they were obliged to love their friends. But Christ Jesus made them sensible it was not so originally, and that the exception of enemies was a corruption of the law, introduced by the Pharisees; for which reason he took great pains to revive and bring back to its primitive and original purity, the law of loving and forgiving our enemies, which was almost abolished and worn out of the minds and hearts of mankind. Christ had a right to do so: 1st, as supreme Lord of the creation; 2d, as shewing the example in himself; and, 3d, as the promises of forgiving us, is grounded on our forgiving the offences of others.

Almighty God, as sovereign Lord of the Universe, has a right to lay down for his creatures, the works of his hands, such laws as he thinks proper. Essentially wise, and good as wise, he orders and commands us to forgive our greatest enemies; and the law must be obeyed, otherwise we incur the penalties he has been pleased to denounce against all transgressors of the

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the law—eternal perdition. “How is it possible,” you will say, “to forgive a person who intended—who effected your entire ruin, by detraction, by envy, by secret villainy or open violence?” Were it not possible, Christians, the Almighty God would not have commanded it: He has commanded it, therefore it must be possible. For be pleased to observe, God does not require these great, noble, and difficult sentiments of forgiveness from us, considered barely as men, but as Christians, aided and assisted by the all-powerful grace of God. What we could never pretend to do of ourselves, or from the power of nature alone, becomes not only practicable, but easy, by the strength of grace. Behold St. Stephen praying, at his dying moments, for those who were putting him to death.

Almighty God not only commands, but exemplifies in his own conduct, the obligation of forgiveness. When the insolvent servant, mentioned in this day’s Gospel, threw himself on his knees before his master, begging a little time, and assuring him he would pay to the last farthing, this master, I say, remitted the whole debt. Thus our Heavenly Master acts by mankind in general. How many sins are daily committed against Almighty God, all over the world! what injuries offered unto his holy name! And in what manner does he treat the offenders: does he punish them when they offend, and with the severity their offences deserve? No: our patient God waits, and calls, and invites, by his grace, to repentance; and when they kneel down and intreat—when they are contrite and humble—he forgives them the whole. Is it not thus he has treated each of us in particular? How often have we offended Almighty God, in the violation of his laws; and how often obtained forgiveness! Shall we, therefore, refuse to comply with these examples of repeated forgiveness, in respect of others? If neither example, nor advice, nor intreaty, will influence you, attend to the words of Christ: *Thou wicked servant, I forgave thee thy whole debt: shouldst not thou, then, forgive thy fellow servant, in like manner?*

In order still more effectually to induce you to forgiveness, Christ Jesus assures us, in the most positive manner, in St. Luke, *forgive and ye shall be forgiven*, not a part, but the whole, without limitation or restriction. Go, therefore, every one of you that harbours any hatred, or ill-will, or anger, or malice against his neighbour; go, I say, kneel down in spirit before Christ, and tell him you offer, in union with his merits and the sacrifice of the cross, the sacrifice of all your enmities and resentments, all the injuries you have received from others, because he requires it, because you love him, and because, being all sinners, you expect mercy, according to his promise. Do this—do it sincerely from your hearts—and Christ will answer you, *Go in peace, thy sins are forgiven thee*.

On the other hand, if we refuse to forgive, we compel, in some measure, our Saviour to refuse forgiveness unto ourselves: as he declares in the Gospel this day, that his Heavenly Father will treat each of us as the master did the merciless servant, unless we forgive our brethren from our hearts. To expect forgiveness, therefore, without forgiving, is expecting that Almighty God will, in our favour, break through a positive declaration he has made. But as he is incapable of doing this, it is plain our unwillingness to forgive must be an eternal, insurmountable obstacle to his mercy and goodness. Until this obstacle be removed, all that you can do towards a reconciliation with God can be of no force or avail. Although you were continually praying in the presence of the Lord, continually performing the greatest austerities of religion, it would avail nothing, until you forgave. Christ Jesus declares, that though you were upon the point of offering up your gift or oblation at the altar, you should quit the very altar, and go to be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. How great an enemy, then, must that man be to himself, and to the interests of his soul, who harbours spleen or hatred, anger or malice against his neighbour! While he means to hurt and prejudice another, it is himself he hurts and pre-
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judices in reality, because his revenge will fall back upon himself. As he will grant no forgiveness, he can expect no forgiveness will be granted him: for St. James declares, *judgment without mercy for him who hath not shewn mercy unto others.*

Moreover, Christians, does not a person of an unforgiving temper put it out of his own power to address the Almighty God in prayer? Is it not one of the chief petitions of the most excellent Lord's Prayer, *forgive us as we forgive others*? If, therefore, we refuse forgiving the injuries we receive, do we not thereby beseech Almighty God not to forgive ourselves the sins we committed, the injuries he has received at our hands? *Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us*; "as we forgive, "do thou forgive us, O Lord! as we pardon others, "do thou pardon us: if we do not forgive, if we do "not pardon from our hearts, all those that have "injured us, do not thou, O Lord God! pardon, but "punish us." Such is the plain construction of that prayer, and such is the great misfortune attending an irreconcilable hatred, that it deprives us of any share we might expect in the mercies of God, and consequently destroys all hopes of eternal happiness. You should, however, know, that when a grievous injury is offered, it is lawful to sue for a just reparation, such a reparation as the laws of justice and equity will allow, because justice is not inconsistent with charity; but then this reparation must be sued for without malice—not with a view of hurting your neighbour, but barely to do yourselves justice. You should know that when a grievous injury is offered, it is the aggressor's business, and a duty in conscience incumbent on him, to make a reparation, and consequently to make the first advances towards such reconciliation.---In the mean time the offended is not to refuse the common marks of Christian charity. And, Christians, is the substance of all that is material on this subject. You see, in fine, how important it is to each of you in particular, not only to know the obligation, but likewise the utility of forgiving our neighbour,

bour, so often as occasion offers; because, by forgiving, Christ Jesus our Lord and our God will forgive our manifold sins, and raise us one day to everlasting happiness in Heaven. *Amen.*

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE Pharisees mentioned in this day's Gospel were a set of men very learned in the Law, who united to their learning an apparent great sanctity of life, whereby they obtained a considerable influence over the minds of the people. Some of these Pharisees resolved to entrap our blessed Saviour in discourse, for which purpose they came and asked him publicly, *was it lawful to pay tribute to Cæsar?* This question was very perplexing, as there were many among the Jews who were taught by the Pharisees, that, as the chosen people of God, the Jews were under no subjection to any master but Almighty God himself, and, consequently, no way liable to any taxes or impositions whatsoever. If, therefore, our Saviour should say it was lawful, the Pharisees imagined he must incur the censure of the greater part of the Jews, who were instructed by the Pharisees, and maintained a contrary opinion. On the other hand, if our Saviour should say it was not lawful, they imagined he must offend the Herodians, or that part of the Jews who adhered to Herod, and maintained, that as Judea was now in subjection to the Romans, who appointed Herod a king, they were obliged to pay taxes and imposts as fixed and determined by law. How did our blessed Saviour behave at this critical juncture? He called for a piece of the tribute-money, and asked, *whose image it bore?* And they answering Cæsar's; he said unto them, *Give therefore unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's.* By this wise and considerate answer he confounded the malice and invidious

vidious designs of the Pharisees, because he only adjudged to Cæsar what the nation acknowledged to be due unto Cæsar; but by adding, *and unto God the things that belong to God*, he reproached the Pharisees for their hypocrisy, in refusing unto God the honour and glory, respect and veneration, due unto him, at the same time that they shewed such apparent zeal for discharging the obligations of justice. The first thing they should have been mindful of, was, *rendering unto God the things that belong to God*—their love, homage, and adoration. This they entirely neglected, to apply to such observances as were capable of procuring them the esteem and applause of mankind. What the Pharisees were guilty of in the days of our blessed Saviour, is unhappily to be found in these our days, in the very centre of Christianity: How many Christians are to be found who never think seriously of what they owe the Almighty God, whilst they discharge with care what they conceive to be due unto man! It is, therefore, Christians, of the utmost consequence to know, 1st, the things that are due unto God; and, 2d, the motives that should induce us to pay unto Almighty God those things that are his due.

What is it in general we owe unto God? St. Paul answers the question—*honour and glory*. Almighty God created the universe for no other end but the honour and glory of his holy name. Before the world was created, before the Heavens or the Earth existed, the Almighty enjoyed in himself, in the contemplation of his infinite perfections, the compleatest happiness. He therefore created the world with a view of manifesting some of his adorable perfections—his power, wisdom, justice, and goodness. His power—in creating from nothing, and with one single word, all things that exist in Heaven above, on the Earth below, or in the waters under the Earth. His wisdom—in the admirable mechanism, the just arrangement and suitable disposition of all the different parts of the universe. His justice—in assigning proper rewards for virtue, and punishments for vice. His goodness in creating man with faculties capable of knowing and loving him,

him, and of course capable of participating of that happiness he himself enjoys. In this grand display of the attributes of God, mankind is to contribute mostly to his glory, by a constant acknowledgment of his supreme power, goodness, and justice; or in other words, by a constant and faithful obedience to his laws. This is the sole end or destination of mankind. For this man was born, to worship, adore, and glorify Almighty God, and for this alone. These divine honours we pay our Lord, in the faithful observance of those holy laws he has been pleased to lay down for us. So long as we fulfil those holy laws we fulfil the end of our creation. But should we decline fulfilling them, we not only decline fulfilling the end of our creation, but subject ourselves as well by this neglect as by the actual commission of crimes, to the eternal punishments the Almighty God has decreed against all those that refuse him the honour and glory due to his infinite majesty and greatness. Is not this, notwithstanding, the case with the greater part of mankind? Even in this country, so long enlightened by the Gospel, how few are to be found who reflect seriously on the end of their creation. To judge from the conduct of most part of Christians, one should be led to think they were made for themselves alone, without any reference to Almighty God; for what is their aim—their pursuits? Is it the honour, the glory, the service of God? By no means; but the indulgence of their appetites, the gratification of their senses, the pursuits of pleasure, of wealth, of distinctions, of honours, and all the vanities of life, except God and his holy service, for which alone they were created and made. *The world is lost for want of consideration,* says the Prophet Jeremiah. How long then will you cease to think on your own most essential interests, Christians? Why will you abuse those noble faculties of your souls, your understanding, and your will, in pursuing trifles and shadows? Surely there are no pleasures to be compared with the delights of Heaven: no wealth, with its possession, no distinctions or honours, with the society of the blessed, the friends of God. Were you to consult your religion, or even your

your reason, you would know that *man was made*, as the Holy Ghost says, *for the glory of God*; and consequently that you decline from the end of your creation, so long as you neglect paying unto Almighty God the honour and glory which are his due. How negligent, Christians, have we not all been in this particular? Which of us can say he has glorified Almighty God, since he came to the use of reason? Can we say with truth that we spent any one single day of our life in the service of God? How miserably then have we wasted our time since we came into the world? *We have been constantly going astray*, as the Royal Prophet says, *and wearing ourselves in the ways of iniquity*. Let us, therefore, humble ourselves in the presence of God, and reflect on our past infidelities and errors with confusion and sorrow. Let us conceive at length our end and destination, and finally resolve to live henceforward agreeable thereto; that is, to honour and glorify Almighty God to the end of our lives, by a faithful observation of his laws. Thus we shall render to God his due, and the motives for doing so come next under consideration.

The first motive, Christians, is the subjection that is due from every creature to the Almighty God. For we are the work of his all-powerful hands. He is our first beginning and ultimate end. From him we received our souls and bodies with all their faculties and powers. Seeing, therefore, that all we have is derived from God, is it not both natural and just that all should be constantly referred unto him. This is the foundation of all natural religion: for there is no wise man upon earth, who listens to the dictates of reason, but must see within himself how necessary it is to acknowledge the supreme and infinite power of the first being and fruitful cause of all things, and that all creatures should be dependent on him and subservient to his will. This is, likewise, the foundation of that extremely pious and meritorious part of a spiritual life, which consists in confessing inwardly in the presence of Almighty God, that we belong entirely to him, and therefore most willingly devote ourselves to his service, consecrating all our desires, actions, and affections,

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to the eternal honour and glory of his holy name. As the Almighty God is the Supreme Master and Lord of All, all should be attentive to pay him the respect and love and honour that are his due. If the servant is bound in duty to honor and obey his master, the subject his prince, the child his parent, what titles and claims has not the Almighty God to the love, honour, and obedience of all mankind? However just those claims, is it not the study of the greater part of mankind to dishonour the Almighty God, by breaking through and violating his holy laws? Can any thing be more ungrateful, more criminal? Let us, therefore, remember, that it is the first essential duty of man, a duty manifested by reason alone, to live in continual subjection to the laws of God.

The second motive is our redemption in Christ. You know that in consequence of the transgression of our first parents, all mankind had forfeited every right and title to the kingdom of Heaven; that they became likewise slaves to Satan and liable to eternal perdition. This was the deplorable state of human nature after the fall of Adam, when the son of God, resolved in mercy to assume human nature, in order to redeem mankind by the effusion of his blood; and this merciful design he carried into execution in the plenitude of time, as St. Paul says, by dying for us upon the cross. By his death Mankind has been redeemed from the slavery of sin and the eternal punishments due unto sin; and also restored to their primitive rights to the kingdom of Heaven: so that we are all properly speaking, as St. Paul observes, *the conquest and the purchase of Christ Jesus*. Now let me ask yourselves, what right must not this divine redeemer and purchaser of our souls, have to our love, affection and services?

Add to all this the eternal rewards he has promised those who love and serve him. As supreme Lord and Master of all things he had an indisputable title to our submission and obedience without engaging himself to any rewards. Yet he has been pleased to make our own eternal happiness the necessary consequence of our obedience to his Laws. Can any thing equal
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this bounty and goodness? But the misfortune is that people never reflect on the happiness that must ensue from serving the Almighty God, and bestow their labour, application and services upon this ungrateful world, in which they meet with nothing but solicitude, affliction and disappointment in the end. For what is all the happiness of this world at the hour of death? At this dreadful moment we certainly would give the whole world that we had spent our lives in the service of God. Why then shan't we adopt and follow the same principles at present? Let us now begin, as the prophet says, what we never should have omitted, paying to God the things that are due unto God; honour and glory in obeying faithfully and constantly his holy Laws. If we do, we certainly will receive from Almighty God, the things that are due in virtue of his promise, to all his faithful servants—Grace in this life and eternal happiness in the next. *Amen.*

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE extraordinary Faith of the woman who was cured by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and the extraordinary blessing that attended it, are the most remarkable points in the Gospel of this day. We have instances in the Gospel of several persons being miraculously healed by our blessed redeemer; but their faith was not so perfect: for they applied publicly to Christ Jesus for that purpose, and humbly intreated to be relieved from their infirmities; even the very ruler of the synagogue, the president of the Jewish congregation, whose duty it was to explain true faith by his actions as well as doctrine. But the woman in question made no prayer or application unto Christ: She concluded within herself, that she would be infallibly cured if she could but touch the hem of his garment; so lively was her faith, and so great the opinion she had conceived of his power
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and goodness. Nor was she deceived, Christians, in her expectations, for the moment she touched the garment of Christ Jesus, he turned about, saying, *daughter be of good hope, thy faith has made thee sound*; and the woman was perfectly cured from that hour of the flux she had laboured under for many years, which she despaired of ever finding a remedy for except from Christ Jesus. This miracle being performed, our Saviour went with the ruler of the Synagogue to his house, where his daughter lay dead. But finding the house crouded with musicians and players upon instruments (as was customary with the Jews to hire people of this kind, to perform and exhibit a mournful sort of music at their funerals) he ordered them all to retire: in order to shew us, as the holy Fathers observe, that the blessings of God are not to be obtained amidst the tumult and dissipation of the world. Such as intend to partake of the blessings of Heaven, must withdraw frequently from the croud, to occupy their thoughts in the contemplation of Heavenly things—of God and his infinite perfections; his power, greatness, wisdom, mercy and justice; and the obligations of their respective states. The voice of Heaven can scarcely be heard amidst the hurry and distractions of this world; nor can the grace of God make any great impression upon a mind quite occupied with the interests and advantages of this life, or a heart drunk and infatuated with its guilty joys. To prepare our souls therefore for the Heavenly visitation, we must frequently banish from the mind all worldly thoughts, and root out from the heart all terrestrial affections. When this is done we have a right to expect that Christ Jesus will visit us inwardly with his Heavenly Grace.

Soon as he had driven the croud and players upon instruments out of the apartment, where the ruler of the synagogue's daughter lay dead, Christ Jesus *took hold of her by the hand, and the girl rose up; and the fame thereof ran over all that whole country.* The publication of those illustrious and wonderful miracles was a natural consequence of their performance in a very short time for the good and happiness of man,
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and great indeed must have been the ideas of the power and goodness of Christ Jesus, in those who had been eye-witnesses to these facts, in beholding within the short compass of a few minutes, one cured of an inveterate and dangerous disorder, that already had baffled all her pursuits for a cure, by only touching the hem of his garment, and another raised from the dead and restored to life, by his taking her by the hand. Great also must have been the impression which these facts, verified by undeniable witnesses, made upon the minds of all that heard them. From these it was easy to conclude that the power of Christ Jesus was beyond all limitation, and his goodness equal to his power.

Have we not also, Christians, great reason to be impressed with lively sentiments upon those illustrious facts of our blessed Lord and Redeemer? We cannot doubt but all those who laboured under any infirmity in the neighbouring parts, where the rumour of those miracles had spread, immediately came to Christ Jesus for relief. Why shan't we behave in the same manner? Have we no spiritual wants or necessities? Do we labour under no infirmity of the soul? Alas! how many are dead in reality in the eyes of God; that is, deprived of his holy Grace, which constitutes the spiritual life of the soul, and yet continue in that dreadful situation, without the least anxiety of mind; without any desire, any application to recover the spiritual life they had been deprived of by the commission of sin? It remains for them like the ruler of the synagogue, to recur to Christ Jesus, and beseech him with humility and compunction, to restore their souls to life, by imparting his holy grace and the forgiveness of their sins. *For he is the lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the whole world.* He is the divine Author of life and death. *In his hands he holds the very keys of Hell,* as the Royal prophet says. All you therefore that have lost the life of your souls, go to Christ Jesus: As God he has power, as Christ the goodness to restore your spiritual life, as related in this day's Gospel. Remember that he is still seated on a throne of mercy at the
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right hand of his father in the kingdom of Heaven, where he is continually exerting the supreme power that was given him as man, over the whole creation. *If you sin*, do not forget, says St. Paul, *that you have an intercessor in Heaven, who is continually intreating and importuning his Father in your favor.*

There are others who may not be quite dead in the eyes of God, but still are troubled with, and labour under many spiritual infirmities; a spirit of worldliness, a spirit of vanity, a certain coldness or indifference in the exercises of religion; in a word, a constant negligence in the service of God. A situation of this kind, although it may not seem at first appearance to be any way dreadful, is certainly most fatal and prejudicial in its consequences; because it leads by slight and secret, but criminal omissions, to omissions of our most essential obligations. The masters of a spiritual life say, it were much safer for one to have committed some considerable fault than remain in a state of this kind; because a considerable fault creates a horror in the soul, which moves it to repentance and amendment of life; but people possessed of that torpor or coldness continue so for many years, and commonly pass away their lives in a certain indifference and lukewarmness, which disguise the most considerable faults, under the appearance of slight neglect and pardonable frailties. You think, says the angel of the Lord in the revelations, *you think you are alive, or in favor with God; yet I tell you, you are dead, in a sinful state, in his sight.*

If there be any amongst us, Christians, in this unhappy situation, who fancying themselves safe under the false appearance of fulfilling their duty, whilst externally they fulfill the law, but fulfill it with langour, with coldness and indifference; they may justly be compared to the woman under our consideration, who for many years had been troubled with a slow, lingering but mortal distemper. Although this should be the case let us not despond. The remedy is at hand. Like the sick woman let us turn to Christ Jesus and approach to him. If she was restored perfectly to health from a mortal distemper
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by only touching the hem of his garment, what may not you expect, you who approach humbly and sincerely to Christ in his holy sacrament, wherein he gives himself entirely to us for the sanctification and nourishment of our souls? You must know, Christians, it is the peculiar effect of this sacrament to strengthen and invigorate the soul, and thereby banish that weakness and feebleness of spirit, which hinder a great many from serving Almighty God with the fervency and fidelity he requires. Every sacrament has a peculiar virtue. Baptism cleanses the soul from original sin, makes us members of Christ, children of God and heirs to the kingdom of Heaven. Confirmation makes us perfect Christians and gives us the strength and resolution that are necessary to profess our faith publicly, even in the greatest dangers of life and property. Penance blots out and effaces the sins committed after baptism and restores us to the friendship and sanctifying grace of God. But the Eucharist nourishes the soul, adds to the grace and righteousness we already had received in the sacrament of Penance. And this is the reason why it was instituted by Christ Jesus, under the marks and appearances of nourishment. *My flesh is truly food;* says our Lord, *and my blood is truly drink,* whence Divines conclude, that as material food nourishes the body, so the divine Eucharist must nourish the soul, and consequently become the most effectual remedy for the spiritual weaknesses of the soul. Let me repeat it, Christians, if such great virtue and efficacy could arise to the sick woman of the Gospel, from the bare touch, not of the body of Christ, but of the hem of his garment, what blessings have you not a right to expect,—what strength to resist your spiritual enemies,—what vigour to advance forward in the ways of eternal life, from the participation of the body and blood, the soul and divinity of Christ Jesus in his holy sacrament? It is here he invites us to come unto him, in order to be cured of all the infirmities of our souls; saying as he formerly did in the Gospel, *Come unto me all ye that labour and are burthened, and I will refresh you.* Why then do
you

you not answer and comply with the tender invitations of Christ Jesus? You know the miserable condition of your souls. You know how feeble your virtue is, how little sensible you are of the things of God. Why do you not then seek after and make use of *that heavenly food which the Royal Prophet says, makes and constitutes the strong?*

Approach therefore respectfully the person of Christ Jesus; touch the hem of his garment with a lively faith and a firm confidence in his mercies, and you certainly will be cured—cured of a spirit of worldliness or that excessive attachment to this world which absorbs all your thoughts and affections, and leaves no time to think on God or the things of God—cured of a spirit of vanity and folly, which makes you set the greatest value upon the painted toys and gaudy trifles of this world; whilst you utterly neglect the most material concerns of your soul, the joys and glory of the kingdom of Heaven—cured of a certain insensibility which leaves you no relish for the things of God; no desire of seeing or enjoying God—cured, in a word, of a certain uneasiness, a kind of secret desperation which leaves you little or no hopes in the mercies of God, and makes you tremble whenever you look into eternity, and consider the dreadful fate of all those who become victims to his severe and inflexible justice. Approach, I say, respectfully to your God, and you shall hear within yourselves, the comfortable assurance our Saviour gave the woman in the Gospel: *be of good courage my child, thy faith has made thee whole.* How delightful must an inward inspiration of this kind be! Undoubtedly it surpasses infinitely all the happiness of this life; as it is always grounded on the love of God and the strongest hopes of eternal happiness. *Amen.*

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

BY the two parables mentioned in the Gospel of this day we are to understand the rise, establishment and progress of the Christian religion. It is called the kingdom of Heaven, because by this divine establishment or law, Almighty God rules over the hearts of mankind; and because by the observation of this divine law alone mankind can attain the kingdom of God. It is the christian religion that has established the spiritual empire of Christ Jesus upon earth: it is likewise the christian religion that points out the way to, and supplies us with the necessary means for obtaining that heavenly Empire, which is the inheritance of the true and faithful disciples of Christ, and therefore very justly called the kingdom of Heaven. This religion which is called the kingdom of God in the Gospel, was very inconsiderable at first, being confined to a few persons of no figure or authority---the Apostles of Christ; and known only in one single spot of the Earth--the city of Jerusalem. From these slender beginnings it arose gradually to such a pitch of greatness and splendor, as struck the whole world with wonder and amazement: not unlike the rising day, which at dawn is scarcely discernable to the sharpest eye, it began to grow bright, still brighter, untill at length it cast such a blaze as drew the attention and admiration of all mankind. For this reason our Saviour compares it to a grain of mustard-seed, which although it be one of the smallest of all grains that are sown in the Earth, often shoots up in warm countries, where it is cherished by the genial heat of the sun; into a lofty and branchy tree, so as to afford shelter and cover to the very fowls of the air. And this is the reason why it is compared to a small portion of leaven, which has the virtue to ferment, and by fermenting swell a small quantity of flour, into a large and considerable mass.

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Nothing indeed, Christians, can be more wonderful than the establishment and progress of the Christian faith. Although it was confined in the beginning to a very few, and those few, poor, obscure and illiterate, and shut up within the walls of Jerusalem; yet it soon spread into the neighbouring parts; and from the neighbouring parts into the adjacent countries; and from the adjacent countries into the remotest parts of the Earth: insomuch that St. Paul could justly boast that the Christian religion had been spread, even in his days, all over the world. The hand of God, and his hand alone, undoubtedly accomplished this great work, as must visibly appear to any candid person who impartially considers the event. For what was to be done in order to establish the Christian religion upon Earth? For this purpose it was necessary to abolish the superstitions of the Pagan religion; remove the prejudices and errors of Mankind; to give them new maxims and new sentiments; in a word to change the whole face of the Earth. In this great work, it was necessary to contend with the abuses of power, the wisdom of philosophers, the zeal of idolaters, and the corruption of libertines and unbelievers. But how could all this be compassed by a few men, who had neither learning nor credit, nor fortune, nor friends to support them? Undoubtedly it could not, if the Almighty God had not interfered and brought about by his infinite power the accomplishment of the prophecy which Christ Jesus pronounced in the Gospel of this day; saying, *the kingdom of Heaven is like unto a grain of mustard seed; which when sown is the smallest of all grains, but afterwards shoots up into a lofty tree; so as to afford shelter to the birds of the air.*

The visible change that appeared in the world upon the establishment of Christianity, proves it came from God, and was the work of God. What adds to this certainly is the nature and character of that religion which was established upon the ruins of idolatry all over the world; the sublimity of its mysteries, the purity and severity of its morals: for did the Christian religion offer nothing to our belief, but what is
clear

clear and conceivable; did it prescribe nothing but what is pleasing to nature, it might have been established in the world without any extraordinary difficulties. But Christians, it is quite the reverse; for it contains many deep and profound mysteries which surpass all human comprehension, and prescribes many severe duties which are repugnant to human nature in the highest degree—humility, mortification, forgiveness, the love of our greatest enemies, a spirit of disinterestedness, contempt of riches, and a constant resolution of sacrificing our fortunes and our lives, rather than transgress any one material point of the law. And yet this law, so repugnant to human nature, so contrary to all the sentiments of flesh and blood, which is grounded on the cross, and preaches up nothing but the cross, was received, embraced, and professed by all mankind, in a very short space of time, owing to the co-operation of the powerful hand of God. Other religions have indeed made a great progress in the world. That of Mahomet in particular has over-ran a great part of the Earth; but this religion is grounded on the grossest ignorance, as it forbids the use of letters, favours the passions, tolerates the most licentious disorders, and was besides supported by violence, and propagated by fire and sword. Therefore, it cannot be surprising it should have met with a kind reception from the ignorant, and the corrupted part of mankind. But that the Christian religion, which restrains every passion, condemns every disorder, and forbids even the least criminal thought or desire, should be propagated and established amongst mankind, without any other arms, as St. Paul says, than the virtue of the cross of Christ, and amidst the most violent persecutions that could be raised by the fury of tyrants or the rage of Hell, is really surprising in the highest degree; so that we may justly admire with the Apostle St. John, *the great victory which our faith has gained all over the world!*

These are, Christians, the foundations or the strong and undeniable reasons which prove that the Christian religion is the work of God; because if it had not been the work of God, it could never have been established
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among mankind, from the opposition it has to all the notions and sentiments of man. Now if the Christian religion be the work of God, as it evidently is, it necessarily follows, its mysteries are true, and its laws holy and just; because Almighty God who is the essential and eternal truth, the author and source of all justice and holiness, could not support or authorize any thing inconsistent with truth, justice and holiness. It follows also, that the promises and threats contained in the Christian religion must necessarily come to pass, as they are the declarations of Christ Jesus the Son of God. These promises and threats consist in eternal happiness for all those who fulfil the laws of Christ; and eternal misery and pain for all those who refuse fulfilling the laws of Christ. We have all embraced and daily profess the Christian faith. We call ourselves Christians, and glory in being so called by the rest of mankind. But are we deserving of so glorious a name? No: unless we fulfill the laws of Christ, and square our actions by the maxims of his gospel. You, who stile yourselves Christians, don't deceive yourselves; you possess the shadow, not the substance: the figure, not the reality; the name, not the character of Christians, whilst Pagan vices disgrace your actions—avarice, contention, dishonesty, haughtiness, arrogance, and dissoluteness. Answer me now, how are these reconcileable with the maxims of the faith you profess, which preaches up nothing but humility, self-denial, justice, godliness, and pureness of soul?

Christians! Christians! can any thing be more capable of filling us with shame and confusion in the eyes of the Lord, than to consider the divine religion we profess, which converted and sanctified the whole world; and in the place of error, superstition, oppression, and dissolution, substituted truth, religion, charity, and reservedness, insomuch that the primitive Christians were distinguished by the name of Saints, has made no impression on our minds, no alteration in our life or actions, these many years past. What can be the cause of such extreme insensibility on our parts? It is this; because you are Christians, you vainly flatter yourselves with a false security;

ty: but I tell you, on the part of Almighty God this day, that nothing will put you in possession of that glory which Christ Jesus has purchased for you on the cross, or screen you from his terrible justice in Hell-fire, but by looking into and discharging the duties incumbent on you all as Christians. Looking into the obligations of your faith will shew you that professing the Christian religion, without fulfilling its holy laws, instead of being an advantage, is on the contrary the greatest misfortune imaginable; because Christ Jesus assures us in the Gospel, that the Heathens themselves will be treated with less severity the last day, than those who believed in Christ, and did not fulfil his laws.

It remains for us, therefore, to be extremely thankful to God for having called us to the faith of Christ, which is the only way to the kingdom of Heaven, as Christ Jesus says, *This is life everlasting, that they know thee, O Heavenly Father! and whom thou hast sent—Christ Jesus*; and in the second place, to form a strong resolution of living up to our faith, in a manner becoming Christians; and the Lord God will surely reward our faith, and crown our good works for a little time on Earth, with eternal joys in Heaven. *Amen.*

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

NOTHING can be more instructive than the subject laid before us in the Gospel of this day, as it discloses, on one hand, the wisdom whereby the eternal God governs this world, and, on the other, his abundant mercies towards mankind. *The kingdom of Heaven, says Christ Jesus, is likened to a man that soweth good seed in his field, but while he was asleep, his enemy came and sowed tares upon the wheat.* The field here means this world, where every country, every city, and perhaps every village, bears justice to this parable: where the good and the bad, the elect and the reprobate, the wheat and the tares, grow

up to maturity; the one planted by the finger of God, the other by the great enemy of man—the Devil. Distinctions here, it is true, are not seen, but those which arise from the policy of human laws or human inventions. That strict and rigorous justice which is the prerogative of the Almighty, is neither felt nor exercised here below: Here his abundant mercies are his distinguishing attribute.—This mercy disarms his justice, or no sin would remain one instant unpunished. The terrible exercise of his justice is awfully beheld in the sudden expulsion of the fallen angels from the realms of light to the everlasting abodes of horror. One sin, and that only in thought, produced in an instant the great revolution in Heaven, as stated by St. John; and behold the whole world is covered over with sinners, who move on as securely as if they had a license to sin, or that sin now was not so criminal as it formerly was. But, Christians, God being essentially unchangeable, sin to him must ever be equally and invariably hateful; but his abundant mercies disarm his justice in this life, in hopes, as the Spirit of God declares, in the 36th chap. of the Prophet Jeremias, *that they may return every man from his wicked ways, and I will forgive their iniquity and their sin.* This patient forbearance on the part of God, should be no reason why the sinner should delay, but, on the contrary, the chief motive for a speedy repentance: for the Angels are represented this day to be zealous to uproot the sin and the sinner,—*wilt thou that we go and gather it up? No,* says the Lord, *lest, perhaps, gathering up the tares, you root up the wheat also together with it.* The mysterious dispensation of Providence is here seen towards his elect here below, where the wicked are often seen to prosper and to trample upon the virtuous and good. Were we to judge by appearances, we should even suppose, from the flood of joys and prosperity which pour in upon sinners in this life, that they are the special friends of Heaven, and that the virtuous, by the afflictions which grow around them, are the unfavoured part of the human race; but observe---*in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, gather up first the tares, and bind*

bind them into bundles to burn, but the wheat gather ye into my barn.

Such is the grand scene exhibited by the Gospel this day, wherein the tender mercies of the Lord towards sinners exhibit the most striking figure.—Wonderful indeed is that patience he displays, and the desire he feels for the return of sinners to his friendship and grace. All-sufficient in himself, the Almighty finds, in the plenitude of his own excellence, the completest happiness, and expresses the same concern for our felicity, as if his was connected therewith, or any ways dependant thereon. The dignity of the master disappears in the tender solicitude of the parent. His greatest care appears to be, to secure our eternal interests, even to the prejudice of his own. His paternal goodness causes the sun to shine and the rain to fall equally on all men. Tares grow up with the wheat: the saint and the sinner, the just and the unjust, the righteous and ungodly, grow up and intermix in this world, where his benignity affords protection to all from winter colds and summer heats. If the ministers of his justice cry out, Lord, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? How comes it then to be overpread with tares? Art thou willing that we go and gather them up together? *No*, replies his mercy, *let them both grow until the harvest.* On account of the wheat he spares the tares.—Mind that, you favoured ones of life; you who imagine this world was made for Cæsar, mind that. Almighty God forbears with the wicked, even shelters them under the wings of his mercy, and suspends the punishment due to their crimes, that they may be converted and live. “The wicked are suffered to live,” says St. Augustine, “that they may be amended, or that the virtues of the just may be tried and exercised by them.” Every hour during their mortality, the Lord ceases not to call them a thousand different ways, sweetly and tenderly inviting them to return to their duties. But be astonished, O ye Heavens! how little regarded are his invitations! His rewards and punishments, his threats and promises, are generally slighted! Men run on in the

wicked ways of sin, unmindful and unfeared of the dreadful fate which is reserved for them during the boundless length of eternity! You who have been enemies to the Lord, by sin, for ten, twenty, perhaps forty years, did you but know *the gift of God*, as Christ Jesus said to the Samaritan in the Gospel---did you but know the sentiments of affection, the bowels of mercy, which your Redeemer possesses towards those who are sincerely resolved to repent; you, I say, who dare not so much as think of conversion, from the magnitude and heinousness of your sins, you certainly would have immediate recourse to the Redeemer of the World, who is ready, not only to wipe away all your sins, but, moreover, to enrich you with his choicest blessings.

I cannot advance a stronger argument to shew the readiness which our Lord displays, upon all occasions, in receiving to his mercy the greatest sinners, provided they return with contrite and humble hearts, than his wonderful patience in bearing with them during the long course of their iniquities. But superior to any argument are his own positive assurances, of granting forgiveness to the greatest sinners, and these assurances supported by a thousand instances. Unhappy sinner, whoever thou art! if Almighty God was not disposed to receive you into his mercies, would he have suffered you to act so long in opposition to his commands? No: he would have crushed you in your wicked course the moment you was forming wicked designs. His thunders are up-lifted in his all-powerful hands, and did he let them fly where his justice directed, at once an end would come to your life and your iniquities; but his abundant mercies prevail, and bind up the arms of his justice. He seems to disregard the interests of his glory, in order to reclaim you to a better life, by repeated instances of bounty and patience. To those outward expressions of his goodness, I might add the inward touches of his holy grace, which awaken, alarm, and rouse up the salutary fear of eternal burning in Hell-fire; as also the absence of that peace and tranquillity, which the worldling is ever in pursuit of,

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and never finds; that content which is never felt by the avaricious or the miser; and the delusion of those joys which the voluptuous and the sensual are ever grasping and never reaching. These disappointments, anxieties, and fears, which agitate and occupy the hearts of sinners, are so many calls of his mercy to the substantial joys and solid peace, which alone are to be found in a virtuous life, and which alone are enjoyed by the servants of the Lord.

But if Almighty God be infinite in mercy, he is equally so in justice. The day of reckoning will come. His justice must be satisfied. *In the time of harvest he will say to the reapers, gather up the tares.* At the end of life each man must appear, the sinner as well as the saint, at the judgment-seat of God, and woe be unto those whom the Lord shall then order *to be bound*, in order *to burn* for all eternity. Such shall be the fate of all those who insult him now, by their immoral lives and multiplied crimes, unless they return to his sweet embraces, by a true change of heart, before it is late.—Before it is late, I say, lest death cut short the thread of life, and then all is lost! Every moment should be mistrusted and guarded against by the sinner, because the fatal stroke is always ready, and yet concealed from view. As in the time past every instant might have been the period of our existence, so in the time to come every instant may become the beginning of our eternity. The morning will surely come when we shall not see the evening, or the evening shall come when we will not see the morning.----This awful period may now be near at hand.

Many reasons press on me to shew the necessity of immediate conversion; but I will argue with sinners in their own way, and see what grounds they stand upon who protract their conversion to the end of life, and rely then upon special aids from Heaven.

To consider the security wherein the enemies of God (by that word I mean all sinners) live, one should suppose they were masters of their days, and had futurity at their disposal. We know, notwithstanding,

standing, that nothing is more uncertain than life, whether we consult reason, religion, or experience. Reason tells us, that life depends on the inward disposition of the corporal frame; on the harmony and concurrent action of its different parts, whereof many are so finely drawn, and of so delicate a texture, that a slight accident, a mere nothing, is often enough to disturb the motion, and destroy the powers; so that it becomes really wonderful, from the delicacy of the organs whereon life depends, and the manifold accidents whereunto we are liable, that sudden deaths are not more frequent; and this surprise increases, when we consider the numberless physical complaints to which we are liable, besides the adventitious evils of unwholesome air, hard labour, violent exercise, and intemperate excess. Life is, at most, but a small portion of air, which is continually circulating within us, until it finds a proper passage to issue out and take its flight. And is this life that solid foundation whereon to build the hopes of future conversion? Is this the well-bound raft whereon to risk, in the tempestuous ocean of life, our souls, our eternity, our hopes, and our all? Deluded sinners! you imagine you will have time to repair the immoralities of your past life, and return unto the Lord your God; but did you ever consult your reason on this head? did you ever survey, with care, the many dangers which surround you on every side? did you ever examine the texture of those parts which are the essential props of life? You did not surely, or you would have seen how slight and precarious were your grounds of dependance.

The sinner's dependance on future conversion appears still more perilous from the assurances given us by religion, that *death shall come like a thief at night: Ye know not the day or hour.*---*Be prepared*; for judgment without mercy shall fall upon all sinners, as the Gospel this day assures you: *bind up the tares to burn.* The Apostles exhibit the same truths in their writings; and the ministers of Christ Jesus daily proclaim the evils of delayed conversions; and still you dream away life in the very arms of death, under the false
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idea of returning to the Lord on a future day. You who make a traffick of salvation, by casting plans for future times, turn your eyes about, consult experience, and behold what havock in a few years death has made among your friends and acquaintances; consult the bills of mortality, they will support the truth I now advance, that nothing is more uncertain than death; and equally true it is, that on death your lot for eternity depends. If, therefore, Heaven or Hell must be the eternal destiny of every one, if this destiny depends on a good or bad death, if the circumstance and period of death be veiled up in impenetrable darkness, it follows, that we should not delay one instant our conversion to the Lord our God; for although our God is abundant in mercies, he is still a jealous God---jealous that those mercies which he now offers should be slighted, because his justice may withhold them from the sinner hereafter.

Besides, the folly of protracting conversion to a late period, is increased by the obstacles to conversion, and the difficulties which old age and infirmity present. To macerate the body by wholesome penance, to chastise it for its rebellious and criminal gratifications by fasting, is not easily done at a time when all the powers of nature call for indulgence and support. Penance being a satisfaction due to the Divine Justice, for sin, and absolutely necessary, in youth becomes difficult, and in old age almost impossible. This conduct is also marked by injustice and ingratitude, in devoting the last, least, most feeble, and most uncertain part of life to the service of the Lord, in return for all the blessings heaped on you for many years. Attend, therefore, to the counsel of the Holy Ghost, *—be mindful of your Creator in the days of your youth.* But if his counsels are insufficient, listen to his threats:---*delay not to be converted to the Lord, and defer it not from day to day; for his wrath shall come on a sudden, and in the time of vengeance he shall destroy thee.* Eccl. And in Prov. 1.---*I have called upon you, and you would not listen to me. I have stretched out my hands, and you would not regard me. You have despised all my counsels, and neglected my reprehensions: therefore I will*

laugh at your destruction; and when you shall call upon me in your turn, I will be deaf to your cries. How terrible is all this! The same says Christ Jesus in the Gospel:—*ye shall seek me, and ye shall not find me, and ye shall die in your sins.* Thus it is that God threatens to deal by finners in their last extremity, who during life neglect the time of their visitation, the gracious calls and mercies offered to them. This made the great St. Augustine say, “penance done by a sick man is sick, and that done by a dying man, I fear is also dead—for he seldom dies well who lived ill.” Common observation confirms those remarks of St. Augustine: When finners come to that extremity, and lie agonizing between Heaven and Hell, under the stroke of divine judgment, seldom are they so sensible of their wickedness, or so efficaciously touched with the remorse of a sincere sorrow for their past crimes, as they are distracted with the terrors of an approaching death, and the dark visionary apprehensions of what is to come. The pains and agonies both of mind and body, together with the heaviness and stupidity caused by sickness, even when the use of reason is not entirely taken away (as frequently happens in fevers), are enough to disqualify finners, in a great measure, from applying their thoughts seriously to the important affair of their souls’ salvation. In such condition, generally speaking, they do but discharge themselves of burthen some reflections, as mariners do of the cargo of a ship that has sprung a leak: every thing is done in a hurry, and with precipitation. Sinners only part with their sins in the one case, as those mariners do with their goods in the other,—to pick them up again, when the leak is stopped, or the storm appeased.

Supposing, now, that a sinner, by a long life and creeping infirmity, should have the time, will he obtain the grace of perfect repentance at the end of life? That is a question too presumptuous to answer in the affirmative: for Christ Jesus declares, *no man can come to me unless he be drawn by my Father.*---How? by grace. Now grace being the choicest gift that God confers on man, in general it is reserved for the special

special friends of Heaven. To sinners he offers, nay presses them, by the preachers of the Gospel, to accept the graces of conversion and forgiveness: and will our good God, think you, perform the greatest of all miracles to the dying sinner, in bestowing the grace of a true conversion, when this grace, during a long life, has been constantly offered, on the one hand, and constantly rejected, despised, and trampled on, on the other? Do not deceive yourselves---a true conversion at the point of death, under the circumstances that I have just touched upon, is almost equally unfrequent in the Christian world, as the appearance of a comet in the planetary system. Appearances of penance, it is true, may then be strong; but these appearances are scarcely ever grounded on the love of God. "The cries of a dying sinner," St. Augustine remarks, "are not them of one who forsakes sin, but whom sin forsakes; who trembles not for the injury he has offered the Lord by his crimes, but for the punishment ready to avenge those crimes."

In cases where penance is to be begun at the end of life, men should exert all their powers in bewailing their sins, and calling earnestly for mercy through Christ Jesus, as one drowning should grasp the twig or bulrush when no other chance of safety remains; but as none but a madman would plunge into a whirlpool, because a twig or a bulrush presents the bare possibility of an escape, so none but madmen will trust their salvation to a death-bed repentance. The honour of Almighty God seems bound to check the insolence of those, by refusing them mercy, who constantly refused and spurned it during life.---And let me ask, do they not justly deserve to be abandoned by God at the hour of death, who abandon him during life, and despise the riches of his goodness and mercy? Is it to those who deserve it least, that God will shew the greatest favours? Is it to the most audacious and ungrateful sinners that he will be the most indulgent? Is it, I say, to be supposed, that, after walking on boldly in the road of

perdition, the sinner shall snatch Heaven in a moment, when the best of Christians scarce attain to it after many years? Mercy, indeed, may come at the last gasp; but what right have you to expect that your death will obtain that favour, whose life earned nothing but anger, or who cease to sin only when the power of sinning is taken away? Be not deceived, Christians, God despises those late conversions, which the dread of Hell, not the love of justice, produces.

Far am I from fixing limits to the unbounded mercies of the Lord, or to deny but late conversions may and have happened, although we know of none. Should you tell me here, the good thief at his last hour was received into favour.---I deny that point, and maintain, with the great St. Augustine, it was not his last, but his first hour, inasmuch as he never was illumined before with the light of faith. But the glorious light of faith has shone on you since the dawn of life, and your duties have been laid before you by the preachers of the Gospel.---That Gospel this day thunders out, the tares shall be bound and burnt: sinners who resist or slight the mercies of God, shall be cut off in their sins, and bound for ever in Hell. *But the wheat bring into my barn:* all you who this day forsake sin, and bend your necks under the sweet yoke of Christ Jesus, shall be received, after this uncertain life, into the bright mansions of his glory in Heaven. *Amen.*

WHITSUNDAY.

THE great event to which the Church calls your attention this day, is, the descent or coming down of the Holy Ghost on the Apostles in the shape of tongues of fire; and it claims your attention so much the more, because it is not only a commemoration of a past event, but a real renewal of the same in favour of all the faithful who are duly prepared.

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Let us then consider it as recorded in Holy Writ, both with regard to the astonishing effects which this Divine Spirit produced in the minds and hearts of the Apostles, and those which the same Spirit will produce in us, if we oppose no obstacles to his designs.

We read then (in the Acts of the Apostles, ch. 2), that fifty days after the glorious Resurrection of our Lord from the dead, ten days after his triumphant Ascension to Heaven, on the very day that the Jews celebrated the giving of the Law to Moses on Mount Sinai, the Disciples being all together in one place, *there came a sound from Heaven, as of a mighty wind coming, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting, and there appeared to them parted tongues, as it were of fire, and it sat upon every one of them; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they began to speak with divers tongues, according as the Holy Ghost gave them to speak.*

Such was the outward manifestation; but how wonderful the inward effects! This Divine Spirit, with which the Apostles were filled, was to them, and is, proportionally, to us, a Spirit of Truth, a Spirit of Sanctity, and a Spirit of Strength.---A Spirit of Truth, because, replenishing us with his Divine Light, he guides us into all truth; a Spirit of Sanctity, because, uniting himself to us, he removes from us every obstacle to sanctity; a Spirit of Strength, because he enables us to do and suffer every thing that God's Law requires of us. He was a Spirit of Truth to the Apostles: in a single instant he persuaded them of truths the most harsh in appearance and the most disagreeable to every sense of nature, and this at the same time without any previous disposition, nay, with every obstacle on their side, for they were dull, stupid, heavy, and ignorant, as Christ himself reproached them for these imperfections: though they had been for three years under the tuition of this divine Master, yet did they not seem to be much more enlightened by his instructions. But the instant that they received this Divine Spirit, the truths that before had appeared so incredible, now with the most glaring light manifested themselves.

themselves. To renounce the world and themselves, is no longer a mystery; they see into the secret springs whence this doctrine flows, as well as its glorious consequences.—To bear their cross and carry it with patience, is no more a misfortune; to love their enemies, and pardon the most flagrant injuries, they no more reckon a weakness, nor a meanness of spirit, but the standard of magnanimity, and the true test of greatness of soul.—The riches and honours of this world are no more considered a happiness, nor persecution an evil, whereas they glory in being free from any tie to the world, and rejoice when found worthy to suffer the greatest torments and ignominy for the sake of Jesus Christ.

Such was the effect this Divine Spirit had on the minds of the Apostles; nor was it confined to them alone, but diffused itself daily to the multitude of people, both men and women, who were firmly determined to forfeit their lives rather than deviate from the light they had received. The same would also be produced in us, did we not oppose obstacles to the operations of divine grace.

Now, my dear brethren, let us enter impartially into ourselves, and examine by what spirit we are governed: is it by the light of the Spirit of God? Do we believe, by a pure and lively faith, that to be a Christian it is necessary not only to bear our cross, but likewise to look upon it as glorious and honourable to bear it? that to follow Christ Jesus you must not only detach your heart from the world, but even from yourselves? that you must not only forget the injury received, but still return good for evil? Do you believe, without hesitation, all these moral truths the Apostles not only did on the moment they received the Holy Ghost, but were even ready to lay down their lives for every one of them? Are you resolved, I won't say to die for them, but to bring your corrupt inclinations into subjection, that you should not transgress them? Has the Spirit of God wrought this effect in your hearts? or do you think he has entered into your hearts, there to preside and govern?

Perhaps

Perhaps you will be humble enough to say that he has not entered into your heart, and that you want only the light of that Divine Spirit to conduct you in your actions. Nothing is more common than to make this answer, and charge to the want of grace that sin, which, but for the abuse of grace, would never have been committed. But the spirit of truth will always triumph over that of falsehood, and convince you that your iniquity did not proceed from the want of light and divine grace, but because, when offered, you ever resisted it: *ye always resist the Holy Ghost*. Let us co-operate with the lights we already have, and God will increase their splendor, and be not only a spirit of truth to enlighten us, but a spirit of strength and power to enable us to discharge every point of his divine law.

This powerful and strengthening effect of the Spirit of God never was more manifest than on the solemnity of this day, when men, I mean the Apostles, who before were weak, timid, and cowardly, became in an instant, by the virtue of this Divine Spirit, enflamed with a most fervent zeal---a zeal that emboldened them to declare themselves openly to undertake the most hazardous enterprize, and to suffer for the honour of Christ the greatest hardships this world could inflict.

The Apostles had scarce received this Divine Spirit, when they began at once to manifest and declare themselves.—And what was their first essay? ashamed of that dastardly spirit which had hitherto made them afraid to shew themselves, and stand out for the honour of their Divine Master, they issue forth at once into all public places, and there openly publish and declare that the man lately condemned to the ignominious death of the cross by the unjust sentence of Pilate, was the true Messiah, and the Lord's anointed; that though delivered up to death, it was by his own free choice, and that he was the sovereign master of life and death, which he clearly manifested by raising himself from death to life; that they were ocular witnesses to this truth; that they must testify it, and could not resist the power of the
Holy

Holy Ghost, who took possession of their hearts, and spake through their mouths.

This Divine Spirit gave them courage not only to speak their minds freely, but even to undertake and execute things far above the reach of all human power.—For who were those to carry on what they had in view? twelve poor fishermen, without talents, without credit, without reputation; who were looked upon as the scum of the earth; but still men, who, possessed by the Spirit of God, had nothing less in view than to convert and enlighten the whole world! And what resources had they to accomplish this great work? no other, my God, but the force of thy Divine Spirit! it was he that enabled them to bear down all before them-- the learned as well as the ignorant, the most polite nations as well as the most barbarous, kings as well as their subjects; it was through him they were proof against every opposition, and, in spite of every opposition, of every persecution, of every torment, attained their object, which was the establishment of the true Church of Jesus Christ.

Such again were the operations of the Spirit of God, not only in the Apostles and primitive Christians, but likewise in every just soul; and hence it is that we can easily discern whether we are animated by this Divine Spirit or not.

For to believe that you have received this Divine Spirit, and not dare to declare openly for God; to be silent when you are bound to speak, and shamefully turn aside when God's honour calls for a sacrifice.—To believe that you have received the Spirit of God, and do nothing for the love of God; to be heavy and sluggish in his service, without the least zeal for his interest, the least endeavour for the promotion of his honour and glory.—To believe that you have received the Spirit of God, and never to suffer the least grievance for his sake; to look upon every enterprise where his honour is concerned to be difficult, if not impossible: to think that such a conduct is compatible with the residence of the Holy Ghost, is an error

error too gross to be entertained in the mind of a Christian.

Let us then strenuously labour to promote the interest of God, in what regards his Worship, his Religion, his Church, and his Law. Let us not be discouraged by the obstacles that may stand in the way, for the Spirit of God will strengthen us and make us victorious. As we must meet with contradictions, so we should be ever prepared with patience to withstand them, and derive from thence, as the Apostles did, both merit and comfort in this life, and the reward of the one and completion of the other, as the Apostles do, in the glory and happiness of life everlasting. *Amen.*

LAST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE Church finishes and begins the ecclesiastical year with the same Gospel, or that Gospel which exhibits a picture of the general judgment, and the dreadful circumstances attending it. As the general judgment is the most awful mystery of our holy religion, the Church is of opinion she cannot recal it too often to the consideration of her children; in order, by a just apprehension of the terrible judgments of the Lord, to withdraw their hearts from all attachment to this perishable world, and its deceitful cheating vanities, and to reclaim them from sin and vice, and error. There is, however, some little difference between the Gospel this day, and that of next Sunday, which is this; the Gospel for the first Sunday in Advent barely treats of the last judgment and its foregoing signs; whereas in the Gospel this day we have not only an account of the general confusion and destruction which are to happen the last day, but likewise of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple; the dismal signs that were to be forerunners thereof, the calamity and entire ruin of the Jewish nation, which
was

was a punishment inflicted on them by Almighty God for their obstinacy and infidelity, for having rejected the Messiah promised unto their forefathers, Christ Jesus the Son of God, and Redeemer of Mankind. To effect the ruin of the Jewish nation which had been determined on by Almighty God, Jerusalem and its Temple should be destroyed, and laid level with the ground, as being the seat of the power, wealth, and religion of the Jewish people. This happened some years after the death of our Saviour, when Titus, general of the Roman armies, afterwards Emperor Vespasian, besieged it with a mighty force, took, sacked, pillaged, and destroyed it; overthrowing its walls and edifices, razing its Temple, and killing by the sword, the miserable few that a terrible famine had spared.

As this was the greatest calamity that could befall the Jews, our blessed Saviour was pleased to forewarn his Disciples against it, for fear they or those amongst the Jews, who would become Christians, should be involved in the general destruction of the nation. For this purpose he desires them to fly to the mountains for safety, to avoid perishing with those that were to die, in defending obstinately Jerusalem and the Temple against the Romans. When were they to fly? *As soon as the abomination of desolation foretold by the Prophet Daniel, should appear in the holy place*, our Saviour says; that is, as soon as the holy land, the holy city and the Temple should be prophaned by the introduction of the idols or images of the false gods, which were painted on the Roman standards or colours, and which are always called abominations in holy writ. The signal, therefore, of the approaching ruin of Jerusalem, and consequently the moment for the Disciples of Christ to fly, and shun inevitable destruction, was the time when the Roman colours should be displayed in the sight of Jerusalem. Then, says our Saviour, *then let those that are in Judea fly to the mountains: and he that is on the housetop, let him not come down to take any thing out of his house: and he that is in the field, let him not return back to take his coat.* By these expressions our Saviour signifies

signifies before hand, how pressing and urgent the danger should be; and consequently how far it was incumbent on every one to provide for his own safety and preservation without any negligence or delay. *Woe be unto those that are with-child; and to those that give suck in those days:* Because people in this condition are greatly embarrassed; and always incapable of taking the active steps that are necessary to guard against any imminent danger. *Pray that your flight may not happen in winter, or on the Sabbath,* our Saviour says; because it is hard to undertake a difficult journey in the severity of winter; and because it was not lawful to travel more than about one mile, on the Sabbath-day, which should give the enemy an opportunity of taking them and putting them to death. *For then shall be great tribulation,* our Saviour adds, *such as hath not been since the beginning of the world, until now, nor shall be.* Great indeed was this tribulation, as we are assured by all the Historians of those times; especially by Josephus the most celebrated Historian among the Jews, who relates that eleven hundred thousand Jews perished either by famine or the sword, in the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple! He further relates a very extraordinary circumstance indeed, that no one of the disciples of the Lord, or of the Jews who became Christians by the ministry of the Apostles, was involved in this general calamity of the nation. Being warned and admonished by the disciples of our Lord, who had heard from the lips of Christ Jesus the prediction of the approaching ruin of Jerusalem and the Temple, they fled seasonably beyond the river Jordan, into a little town called Pella, where they escaped all the miseries and calamities of war.

Almighty God was so much incensed against the Jews for their obstinacy and infidelity, that probably he would have put an end to the whole nation at this very period, had it not been for a few amongst them, who, faithful to the light that had shined before their eyes, acknowledged Christ Jesus as the Son of God and Redeemer of Mankind: These were the elect amongst the Jews; and it was in favor of these few elect,

elect, that the Almighty was pleased to shorten the days of their public calamity, as the Gospel says; and preserve the remains of that unhappy nation, which are to subsist to the end of the world, when they are to be received again into favor and converted to the faith of Christ, as St. Paul testifies, saying *the remains of Israel shall be saved*. In the mean time, they are to be without power, jurisdiction or dominion; without king, without country, without altar, without sacrifice, deprived as they are of Jerusalem and the temple, wherein alone it was lawful to offer up sacrifices unto the Lord. This clearly points out their reprobation, as the Prophets had foretold, when they should be no longer the people of God; when the Almighty would make unto himself a new and chosen people, composed of all the nations upon Earth; which has been actually accomplished by the establishment of the christian religion all over the world. Before we dismiss this subject, of the destruction of Jerusalem, as foretold by Christ Jesus in the Gospel of this day, it is necessary to inform you of the attempts that have been made by the Emperor Julian, called the apostate, in order to frustrate and annul the prediction of Christ in this respect. From an irreconcilable hatred to christianity and its divine author Christ Jesus, this impious and daring Emperor sent a strong and powerful army to rebuild the walls and temple of Jerusalem. But behold! whilst they were employed in this sacrilegious attempt, huge balls of fire issued out of the very foundations of the Earth, and struck the workmen with such terror, as obliged them immediately to desist and abandon their enterprize. So true it is that Heaven and Earth shall pass away, but the word of God shall remain firm and unshaken, whilst all the presumptuous endeavours of Man against it shall fall to the ground. These particulars which are highly worthy of recollection, as they reflect the greatest honour upon our holy religion, and the greatest shame and confusion upon the enemies of Christ, are related by the best Pagan Historians of those early times.

Besides

Besides the signs of war which were to announce the approaching ruin of Jerusalem, Christ Jesus was pleased to give his disciples other signs of consequence, whereby they might distinguish the impending ruin; namely, the great number of false Prophets that would appear at that very period. In the history of those times we read, that Judea was never infested with a greater number of Impostors and false Prophets, than some time after the death of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; and during the very war in which Jerusalem and the Temple were demolished and the whole reduced and dispersed. Some of those Impostors, Josephus says, after seducing multitudes of the people, retired into a great desert near Jerusalem, where they set themselves up successively for the Messiah; and were daily promising the poor deluded people that followed them, immediate deliverance from all the misfortunes they laboured under: but these vain promises soon ended in the entire ruin of the seducers and seduced. Those false prophets our Saviour means, when he warns his disciples in the Gospel this day, *If they shall say to you; behold he (the Messiah) is in the Desert; go ye not out: for the knowledge of the Messiah was not to be confined to any desert, or corner, or private spot of the Earth, but to shine to the whole world; like the lightning which scarcely starts in the east when it is perceived in the most distant parts of the west.*

From the signs that were to announce the fall of Jerusalem and the Jewish nation, our Saviour passes unto the signs that are to usher in the end of time and the entire dissolution of the earthly frame of this world. *Then the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give its light: then the stars shall fall, and the powers of the Heavens be shaken: Then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man, coming in the clouds of Heaven with great power and majesty. Then shall he send forth his Angel, with a trumpet and loud voice, to gather together his elect from the four winds, from the highest parts of the Heavens to the utmost bounds thereof.*

From

From these awful preparations, the most tremendous scene follows. This is the day of sorrows, foretold by the prophets,—*a day of wrath, of misery and woe.* Then shall we conceive how dreadful it is, as St. Paul says, *to fall into the hands of the living God.*

Consider Christians, and reflect, whilst time remains for reflection, that we must be all witnesses one day to this dreadful scene. We must all appear on the last day before the Son of Man, Jesus Christ our God, to receive according to our works—eternal life, if we lead here a just and righteous life, by fulfilling the laws of Christ: but, good Lord deliver us! eternal death—eternal pain and torture and sorrow, if we lead a sinful life. Which will be our lot? shall we ascend with Christ, or descend to the burning lake? One thing is certain,—our fate is in our own hands. There is none of us, but has it in his power, by the grace of God to attain to eternal happiness. For this purpose let us fear the Lord and his terrible judgments. Let us fulfill his holy Laws, during our conversation on Earth; and if you do, I promise you on the part of Christ Jesus our Lord that on the last day he will bring you with himself, soul and body, into the kingdom of Heaven. *Amen.*



A T A B L E

Of the EPISTLES and GOSPELS for all the SUNDAYS
in the Year.

FIRST Sund. of Adv.	{ Epist. Rom. xiii. 11, 14.
	{ Gosp. Luke xxi. 25, 34.
Second Sunday.	{ Epist. Rom. xv. 4, 13.
	{ Gosp. Matt. xi. 2, 10.
Third Sunday.	{ Epist. Philip. iv. 4, 7.
	{ Gosp. John i. 19, 28.
Fourth Sunday.	{ Epist. 1 Cor. iv. 1, 5.
	{ Gosp. Luke iii. 1, 6.
Christmas.	{ Epist. Tit. ii. 11, 15.
	{ Gosp. Luke ii. 1, 15.
	{ Epist. Tit. iii. 4, 8.
1st Mafs.	{ Gosp. Luke ii. 15, 21.
	{ Epist. Heb. i. 1, 12.
2d Mafs.	{ Gosp. John i. 1, 14.
3d Mafs.	{ Epist. Tit. ii. 11, 15.
New Year's Day.	{ Gosp. Luke ii. 21, 22.
First Sund. aft. Epiph.	{ Epist. Rom. xii. 1, 6.
	{ Gosp. Luke ii. 42, 52.
Second Sunday.	{ Epist. Rom. xii. 6, 16.
	{ Gosp. John ii. 1, 12.
Third Sunday.	{ Epist. Rom. xii. 16, 21.
	{ Gosp. Matt. viii. 1, 13.
Fourth Sunday.	{ Epist. Rom. xiii. 8, 11.
	{ Gosp. Matt. viii. 23, 28.
Fifth Sunday.	{ Epist. Colof. iii. 12, 18.
	{ Gosp. Matt. xiii. 24, 31.
Sixth Sunday.	{ Epist. 1 Thes. i. 2, 10.
	{ Gosp. Matt. xiii. 31, 36.
Septuagesima.	{ Epist. 1 Cor. ix. 24. x. 5.
	{ Gosp. Matt. xx. 1, 17.
Sexagesima.	{ Epist. 2 Cor. xi. 19. xii. 10.
	{ Gosp. Luke viii. 4, 16.
	Quinquagesima.

EPISTLES AND GOSPELS

Quinquagesima.	{ Epist. 1 Cor. xiii. 1, 13. Gosp. Luke xviii. 31, 34.
First Sunday of Lent.	{ Epist. 2 Cor. vi. 1, 11. Gosp. Matt. iv. 1, 12.
Second Sunday.	{ Epist. 1 Thes. iv. 1, 8. Gosp. Matt. xvii. 1, 10.
Third Sunday.	{ Epist. Ephes. v. 1, 9. Gosp. Luke xi. 14, 27.
Fourth Sunday.	{ Epist. Gal. iv. 22, 31. Gosp. John vi. 1, 15.
Passion Sunday.	{ Epist. Heb. ix. 11, 15. Gosp. John viii. 46, 59.
Palm Sunday.	{ Epist. Phil. ii. 5, 11. Gosp. Matt. xxi. 1, 10, & xxvi. xxvii.
Easter Sunday.	{ Epist. 1 Cor. v. 7, 8. Gosp. Mark xvi. 1, 7.
Low Sunday.	{ Epist. 1 John v. 4, 10. Gosp. John xx. 19, 31.
Second Sun. aft. East.	{ Epist. 1 Pet. ii. 21, 25. Gosp. John x. 11, 16.
Third Sunday.	{ Epist. 1 Pet. ii. 11, 18. Gosp. John xvi. 16, 22.
Fourth Sunday.	{ Epist. James i. 17, 21. Gosp. John xvi. 5, 14.
Fifth Sunday.	{ Epist. James i. 22, 27. Gosp. John xvi. 22, 30.
Sun. within the octave of the Ascension.	{ Epist. 1 Pet. iv. 7, 12. Gosp. John xv. 26. xvi. 4.
Whit-sunday.	{ Epist. Acts ii. 1, 11. Gosp. John xiv. 23, 31.
Trinity Sunday.	{ Epist. Rom. x. 33, 36. Gosp. Matt. xxviii. 18, 20.
2d Sun. aft. Pentec.	{ Epist. 1 John iii. 13, 18. Gosp. Luke xiv. 16, 24.
3d Sunday.	{ Epist. 1 Pet. v. 6, 11. Gosp. Luke xv. 1, 10.
4th Sunday.	{ Epist. Rom. viii. 18, 23. Gosp. Luke v. 1, 11.
5th Sunday.	{ Epist. 1 Pet. iii. 8, 15. Gosp. Matt. v. 20, 24.

FOR ALL SUNDAYS IN THE YEAR.

6th Sund. aft. Pent.	{ Epist. Rom. vi. 3, 11. Gosp. Mark viii. 1, 10.
7th Sunday.	{ Epist. Rom. vi. 19, 23. Gosp. Matt. vii. 15, 21.
8th Sunday.	{ Epist. Rom. viii. 12, 17. Gosp. Luke xvi. 1, 9.
9th Sunday.	{ Epist. 1 Cor. x. 6, 14. Gosp. Luke xix. 41, 47.
10th Sunday.	{ Epist. 1 Cor. xii. 2, 11. Gosp. Luke xviii. 9, 14.
11th Sunday.	{ Epist. 1 Cor. xv. 1, 10. Gosp. Mark vii. 31, 37.
12th Sunday.	{ Epist. 2 Cor. iii. 4, 9. Gosp. Luke x. 23, 37.
13th Sunday.	{ Epist. Gal. iii. 16, 22. Gosp. Luke xvii. 11, 19.
14th Sunday.	{ Epist. Gal. v. 16, 24. Gosp. Matt. vi. 24, 33.
15th Sunday.	{ Epist. Gal. v. 25. vi. 11. Gosp. Luke vii. 11, 16.
16th Sunday.	{ Epist. Eph. iii. 13, 21. Gosp. Luke xiv. 1, 11.
17th Sunday.	{ Epist. Ephes. iv. 1, 6. Gosp. Matt. xxii. 35, 46.
18th Sunday.	{ Epist. 1 Cor. i. 4, 9. Gosp. Matt. ix. 1, 8.
19th Sunday.	{ Epist. Ephes. iv. 23, 28. Gosp. Matt. xxii. 1, 14.
20th Sunday.	{ Epist. Ephes. v. 15, 21. Gosp. John iv. 46, 53.
21st Sunday.	{ Epist. Ephes. vi. 10, 17. Gosp. Matt. xviii. 23, 25.
22d Sunday.	{ Epist. Philip. i. 6, 11. Gosp. Matt. xxii. 15, 21.
23d Sunday.	{ Epist. Philip. iii. 17, 21. Gosp. Matt. ix. 18, 26.
Last Sund. aft. Pentec.	{ Epist. Col. i. 9, 14. Gosp. Matt. xxiv. 15, 35.



